A TREATISE Concerning the CAUSES OF THE Present Corruption OF CHRISTIANS, And the Remedies thereof.

In Two Parts.

PART I.

The Second Edition Corrected.

LONDON,
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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the Right Reverend

GILBERT

Lord Biſhop of *Sarum*,

Chancellor of the Moſt Noble Order of the Garter.

My Lord,

THE Treatiſe I now humbly offer to Your Lordſhip in *Engliſh*, has met with a very great and general Applauſe in *French*. A Second Edition of it was deſired in leſs than two Months after the firſt, and it is already Tranſlated into more Languages than one : But that which ought to weigh more than any other Commendation, is the high value Your Lordſhip ſets upon this Book; for if the moſt accompliſhed Writers are the beſt Judges of other Mens Works, there lies no Appeal from

Your Lordſhip's Judgment concerning the worth of this. I have heard Your Lordſhip deliver Your Opinion of this performance in a very particular manner, and reckon it among the beſt Books that this Age has produced, and that in all reſpects, both for Piety and Learning, good Senſe and true Judgment.

Your Lordſhip thought fit that ſo valuable a Work ſhould be put into *Engliſh*. You were pleaſed, My Lord, to commit this Tranſlation to my care, and I could wiſh I had been as well qualified for that Office, as I was deſirous to diſcharge it to Your Lordſhip's Satisfaction. But I am Conſcious of my want of Abilities in this as well as in all other things, and I fear the Work of the Reverend and Worthy Author, who honours me with ſome ſhare in his Friendſhip, has loſt ſeveral Beauties and Graces by paſſing through my Hands. However, My Lord, I have rendered his Senſe as faithfully as I could, and that is all I would be accountable for to the Reader; for if among that Variety of nice and tender Subjects which are touched here, the Author mixes any thing which does not ſuit with every Bodies Notions, it is his Province and not mine to to defend it. He lives in one of the remoteſt Countries in which the Proteſtant Religi-

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on is received, and in what he writes, he had his own Neighbourhood chiefly in View; ſo that his main Deſign was to correct things within his reach, to which the State of that Church, which is now in eminent danger, led him. But I leave to Your Lordſhip to judge, whether that which he thought proper for his own Church, may not be likewiſe of good uſe to others.

And now my Lord, I do gladly embrace this opportunity to make a publick Acknowledgment of the extraordinary Obligations Your Lordſhip has laid upon me. A Poſt in the Service of the Church is not the greateſt Favour I have received at Your Hands: I reckon my ſelf much more beholden to Your Lordſhip for the benefit of your Example and Inſtructions, which I have enjoyed ſeveral Years in your Family. But here I muſt make a full ſtop, and how much ſoever I am inclined to ſay a great deal upon the Subject, yet I know your Lordſhip too well to venture on it; for whatever I may think, I know I muſt ſay nothing.

The beſt return I can make for the large experience I have had of your Lordſhip's Kindneſs and Generoſity, is to put up my moſt hearty Prayers for the long Conti-

Continuance of Your Lordſhip's Life and Happineſs, and for the laſting Proſperity of your Family; this I do my Lord, as truly as I profeſs my ſelf, with all poſſible Reſpect.

Your Lordſhip's

moſt Humble

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moſt Dutiful and

moſt Obliged Servant,

Charles Mutel.

THE
Author's PREFACE

WE have reaſon to wonder at the great Corruptions that at preſent are to be found among Chriſtians. The Religion they profeſs, does chiefly tend to Santify Men, and to Purge the World from Corruption and Vice; and one would think it ſhould produce that Effect, ſince it affords ſuch a clear Light, ſuch powerful Motives, and ſuch effectual Helps to Holineſs. Notwithſtanding all this, Whoever enquires into the Notions and Manners of Chriſtians, muſt have no great ſhare of Sincerity or Judgment; if he does not acknowledge, that Religion has but little influence upon their Minds, and that there is an amazing Contradiction between their Lives and the Rules of Chriſtianity. This Corruption is ſo evident and ſo generally Confeſſed, that I need not ſtand to prove it.

Taking it then for granted, that Chriſtians live in a great neglect of their Duties; it is natural to enquire into the Cauſes *of this Corruption, and to conſider what Remedies ſhould be applied to it. This is what I intend to do in this Treatiſe, in hopes that ſuch an Enquiry will not be altogether unuſeful.*

For Firſt, it may contribute to maintain the Honour,

Honour and the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, and to Confute Infidels and Libertines, who are apt to deſpiſe it, becauſe it's Precepts are little practiſed. If Religion, ſay they, be True and Divine, How comes it to paſs, that it has ſo little efficacy, and that there appears ſo much Diſorder, and Licentiouſneſs among the Profeſſors of it? To undeceive ſuch Men, and to infuſe into them a greater reſpect for Religion, it is of very great importance to diſcover the Cauſes of the decay of Piety; and to ſhew, that if Men are Corrupted, it is not becauſe Chriſt's Religion is inſufficient to introduce Vertue and Order into the World; But that this Evil flows from ſome other Cauſe, and that if Chriſtians did what they might and ought to do, true Piety would not be ſo uncommon as it is amongſt them.

A Second Advantage which may be reaped from this Enquiry; is this; it will appear by it, that how great ſoever the Corruption may be; It is not however, as many imagine, paſt remedy. Which imagination, is a moſt dangerous Prejudice; while Men look on it as impoſſible to ſtem the Tide of Corruption, and to re-eſtabliſh Order and Purity of Manners in the World; they do not ſo much as attempt it, they let things go on at the ſame rate; and ſo the Diſorder increaſes and ſpreads farther. It cannot be denied, but that the Corruption is great, general and inveterate; but God forbid, we ſhould look upon it as an incurable Diſeaſe. The Fountains of it may eaſily be diſcovered; and it is not impoſſible to ſtop them. I hope this

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will be acknowledged by those, who shall attentively, and without prepossession consider, what is proposed in this Work.

Thirdly, There is no means more likely to remove this Corruption, than to cut off the Occasions of it: That is the surest as well as the most compendious Method. One of the main Reasons, why so many excellent Books designed to inspire Men with a love of Religion and Piety, have not all the effect that might be expected from them; is, that the Authors do not sufficiently observe the general Causes of the Depravation of Manners. It is to little purpose to deplore the Corruption of the Age, to exhort Men, and to give them fine Lessons of Morality: The Work of Reformation cannot be much advanced, as long as the Evil is not taken in its Cause, and as long as such Principles and Abuses continue among Christians, as are, and will always be, Obstacles to the Progress of the Gospel.

Lastly, I considered that this Matter had not yet been thoroughly handled by any Author, at least that I know of. Of those who have touched upon it in their Books; some have confined themselves to Considerations purely Moral, and others to Theological Reflections, upon the Errors which are in Vogue, or upon the Controversies which divide Christians; but they have omitted many things which seem essential; no doubt, because they did not intend to treat this Subject purposely, or because they did not take a View of the whole extent of it.

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As these Considerations have made me wish for a long while that among so many able Men who write about Religion, some might undertake so important a Subject; so they have determined me to Publish these Essays upon the Causes of Corruption; hoping that others will apply themselves to the full Discussion of those Matters, which are here but imperfectly hinted at.

But that the Scope of this Treatise may be the better understood; and that no body may expect that in it, which according to the Scheme I formed to my self, ought not to have a place here; I shall acquaint the Reader with one thing, which he may perhaps have foreseen, from what has been already said.

I do not propose to myself to handle this Matter in the way of the Divinity Schools. No Man therefore ought to wonder, if I say nothing of the State in which all Men are born; nor of that Inclination to Vice which is observed in them. For tho' this is the first Original of Corruption; yet certainly this Corruption would be much less, if Christians did use the means which God affords them, to overcome it; and if there were not other Sources which feed and strengthen that vitious Propensity. Besides, I do not consider Corruption in general, as it is Common to all Mankind, but I enquire into the Causes of the Corruption of Christians *in particular. Neither do I design to write a Moral Treatise; so that it must not be expected, that I should discourse of Self-Love and Pride, and of all the other Passions, which*

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are the Ordinary Occaſions of Mens Sins; or that I ſhould trace out all the particular Cauſes of every Sin. This would carry me too far; and ſuch things have been often examined. I therefore apply myſelf only to the general Cauſes; *and I manage the Matter thus.*

I divide this Work into Two Parts, becauſe the Cauſes of Corruption may be of Two ſorts. I ſhall call thoſe of the firſt ſort, Particular or Internal; *becauſe they are within us, and to be found in every particular Man that lives ill. Thoſe of the Second ſort, which are more general, I name* External, *becauſe they proceed rather from certain outward Circumſtances, and from the unhappineſs of the Times; than from the fault of particular Perſons.*

The Cauſes *I ſhall treat of in the* Firſt Part, *are no other, but the ill Diſpoſitions in which moſt Chriſtians are, and which hinder their applying themſelves to Piety: And of theſe I ſhall obſerve Nine.*

I. Ignorance.
II. Prejudices and Falſe Notions concerning Religion.
III. Some Opinions and Maxims which are uſed to Authorize Corruption.
IV. The Abuſe of Holy Scripture.
V. A falſe Modeſty.
VI. The Delaying Repentance.
VII. Mans Sloth and Negligence in Matters of Religion.
VIII. Worldly Buſineſs.
IX. Men's particular Callings.

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The Cauſes *to be Conſidered in the* Second Part *are theſe Seven.*

I. The

The Preface.

I. The State of the Church and of Religion in General.
II. The Want of Diſcipline.
III. The Defects of the Clergy.
IV. The Defects of Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates.
V. Education.
VI. Example and Cuſtom.
VII. Books.

I declare here that in diſcourſing upon theſe Sources, I do not mean to tax all Chriſtians without exception: So when I ſpeak of Ignorance, and of Prejudices commonly received; Knowing and Learned Men are excepted: And when I obſerve certain Defects in the ſtate of the Church and of Religion, in Diſcipline, in Clergy-men, or in Chriſtian Magiſtrates; I ſuppoſe thoſe Faults obtain more in ſome Places than in others. In ſhort, whoever ſhould apply what is ſaid in this Treatiſe, to all ſorts of Perſons and Churches, would certainly miſtake my Deſign.

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And now I muſt deſire thoſe who may chance to ſee this Book, to examine ſeriouſly what I propoſe in it. No Lover of Truth or Religion, can refuſe his attention to a Subject of this Nature. But I hope it will be more particularly welcome to Church-men and Divines; who are called by their Function, to ſet themſelves againſt Corruption, and to endeavour all they can to promote Piety and the Glory of God.

To Conclude; I heartily implore his Bleſſing upon this Work, who put it into my Hand to ſet about it, and who is my Witneſs with what Deſign and Intention I publiſh it.

Part I.

A TREATISE Concerning the CAUSES OF THE Present Corruption OF CHRISTIANS.

PART I.

CAUSE I.

Ignorance.

Cauſe I.

WHEN a Man thinks of the Cauſes of that Corruption which over-runs the Chriſtian World; the firſt which offers it ſelf to his Mind, is Ignorance, and therefore I ſhall begin with that.

Our

Part I. Our Notions and Knowledge, are the firſt Principles of our Actions. We can never love a Thing, or adhere to it, when it is not at all, or when it is but imperfectly known to us: Suppoſing then that Men are Ignorant, or very little Inſtructed in Religion, there is no wonder that they ſhould be Corrupt; for they muſt of neceſſity be ſo. On the other hand, when they appear to be extremely Corrupt, we may conclude, that they want Inſtruction. I do not deny, but that Corruption proceeds ſometimes from the wickedneſs of the Heart, which reſiſts the Light of the Underſtanding; and that Men frequently Act againſt their Knowledge. But it may ſafely be ſaid, That if Chriſtians were well Inſtructed, they would not be ſo Corrupt, and that wherever an extraordinary Corruption is viſible, there is likewiſe a great deal of Ignorance.

This is confirm'd by the Scripture, and by God's Conduct in the Eſtabliſhing the Chriſtian Religion. When the Apoſtles ſpeak of thoſe Diſorders, wherein the Heathens lived before their Converſion, they aſcribe them to the darkneſs of their Minds. * *The Gentiles* (ſays St. *Paul*) *have their Underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God through the ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the blindneſs of their Heart.* The

* Eph. IV. 18.

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ſame Apoſtle calls the Times which preceded the Coming of Chriſt, *the Times of Ignorance.* And the firſt Thing which God did to change the Face of the World, and to reſcue it from Corruption; was to diſpel the Clouds of their Ignorance, and to enlighten them with the Knowledge of Himſelf, by the Preaching of the Goſpel. Cauſe I.

Although Chriſtians cannot be charged with ſo groſs an Ignorance as that of the Heathens; yet they fall very ſhort of that Knowledge they ought to have, and it muſt be confeſſed, that for the moſt part, they live in ſhameful and deplorable Ignorance. This is the Reaſon why Piety is ſo much wanting among them, and why they are ſo Depraved and Vicious; which is the Thing I will endeavour to make appear.

In order to this; As the Chriſtian Religion may be reduced to theſe Two Heads,

Firſt, The Knowledge of the Truth.

Secondly, The Practice of Holineſs.

It is fit to Enquire, Whether with reſpect to theſe, Chriſtians are furniſhed with neceſſary Information? I ſhall make it appear that they are very little Inſtructed.

I. In that which concerns the Truths of Religion. And

II. In

PART I. II. In what relates to manners, and to the Duties, of Chriſtianity.

The Reflections I ſhall beſtow upon both theſe Heads; will I hope, clearly prove, That among thoſe vaſt multitudes of Men, who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, there are very few, who are well acquainted with their Religion. From whence it will be natural to conclude, That they muſt needs be very Corrupt.

I. To begin with the Knowledge of the Truths of Chriſtianity; we muſt diſtinguiſh Two ſorts of Truths in Religion: The General, and the Particular Truths. The General Truths, are thoſe, upon which the whole of Religion is founded; ſuch as theſe, That there is a God, That the Bible is a Divine Book, And that the Chriſtian Religion is True. By Particular Truths, I mean the various Doctrines which Religion contains, and which are the Parts of it; but which at the ſame time, depend upon the General Truths, as upon their Principle. The Doctrine of the Sacraments, of Juſtification, and many others, are of this Number. Now let us conſider the Ignorance of Chriſtians in reference to theſe Two ſorts of Truths:

1. Every Man who makes uſe of his Reaſon, may eaſily apprehend, That the General Truths are the moſt important; that they are thoſe of which one ought chiefly to be per-

perſuaded; and that without theſe General Truths, the Particular ones would be uſeleſs, nay, would not be ſo much as Truths. To Enquire, Whether there be any Sacraments, or how a Man can be Juſtified; one muſt believe firſt, That there is a God, and a Religion: For if I am not convinc'd of the Exiſtence of God, and of the Truth of Religion, it would ſignifie little to me, whether or not there were any Sacraments, and all the time I ſhould employ in the proſecution of this Enquiry, would be loſt. Cauſe I.

This firſt Reflection does already diſcover to us an Eſſential and Capital Defect. A great many Chriſtians want Inſtruction concerning the Principles and Foundations of Chriſtianity; they do not ſufficiently conſider the Certainty and Importance of it. Their Knowledge of Religion, does ſeldom go further than the Particular Truths of it, and does not reach the General. This is ſo common a Fault, that it may be obſerved even in thoſe whoſe Profeſſion it is to Study Religion and to Teach it to others. Some have ſpent the beſt part of their Lives in the Study of Divinity, or in Expounding the Scripture, who never ſeriouſly examined the Arguments for the Truth of Chriſtianity, or the Divinity of the Scripture. Some are Maſters of the principal Controverſies which divide Chriſtians, who would ſtand mute if they were called back to the firſt Elements of

Part I. Religion, and if they were to maintain againſt an Infidel, that there is a Religion, or that the Chriſtian Religion is true. The People enter yet leſs than the Divines into the Examination of the general Truths; and there are very few who either attend to them, or indeed believe them as they ought.

And yet the Whole of Religion depends upon a firm Perſuaſion concerning the principles of Faith; it is that which renders the particular Truths effectual to Salvation, and which begets Piety and the Love of Virtue. When a Man is perſuaded that Religion propoſes nothing but what is certain, he immediately receives with Reverence whatſoever it teaches; he feels an Inclination in himſelf to obſerve its Precepts, and he believes a Judgment and another Life, as if he ſaw them before his Eyes. Such is the Efficacy of a true Faith, and of a ſteady Perſuaſion about fundamental Truths. But without this Perſuaſion it is very hard, not to ſay impoſſible, to adhere ſincerely to Religion, and to perform the Duties of it. And this is the conſtant Source of the Corruption of Chriſtians.

It may perhaps be objected, that all Chriſtians receive the general Truths of their Creeds, and that theſe are not queſtioned but by Pagans and Atheiſts. Upon which I ſhall make two Reflections,

1. It is but too true, that in the Point of Religion, there is at this Day a great Number of Per-

Persons who entertain very loose Opinions and that do at least border upon Atheism. These pernicious Tenets are spread wider than some People think. Not only the Libertines are infected with them, but even the Common People. All the prophane Men and Deists are not to be found at Courts, in Armies, or among the Learned; there are some in Towns, among the Vulgar, and even among Country Clowns. If we examine a little the Discourses and Apprehensions of Men, especially of those whose Life is irregular, if we do but begin to reason with them and press them, we may soon perceive the Principles of Incredulity and Atheism in many of them. It will be found that they are not thoroughly persuaded that there is a God, and another Life; or that if they do not proceed to that degree of Impiety which attacks directly the very foundations of Religion, they harbour at least this Fancy, that God doth not narrowly observe Mens Deportment; that he will not be so severe as to damn them for some Sins they have committed, and that there is no such great harm in gratifying ones Passions, and living at the usual rate of the World. These and the like Sentiments are general enough, and yet they lead the straight way to Deism, and tend plainly to the Subversion of Religion. It would be therefore highly necessary, in order to root out such dangerous Errours, carefully to establish these great Truths; That there is a God, that this

Cause I.

Part I. God ſpeaks to us in his word, and that whatever the Goſpel tells us of another Life, is moſt certain. This I ſay would be altogether needful, if it were but for the Inſtruction of thoſe I have now mentioned, and their Number is greater than is commonly imagined.

2*ly.* We may take notice, that tho' Chriſtians profeſs to believe the Truths of their Religion, yet that Belief is not lively and ſtrong enough in them all. It is Beyond all queſtion, that moſt Chriſtians are ſo only becauſe they were engaged by their Birth in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity; but that after all, they know very little of the Truth and Divinity of it. They would in like manner have been Jews or Pagans, if they had been born in Judaiſm or Paganiſm; ſo that properly ſpeaking they cannot be ſaid to have Faith; for Faith is a Perſuaſion; to believe, is to be perſuaded; and 'tis impoſſible to believe a thing right without reaſon or examination. That which is called Faith is commonly nothing elſe but a confuſed and general Opinion, which makes but very ſlight Impreſſions upon the Heart and Mind; but true Faith is a greater Rarity among Chriſtians than we are aware of. Now as Faith is the only Principle of Piety, ſo a bad Life does chiefly ſpring from Want of Faith and from Incredelity. And there are two ſorts of Infidels; ſome deny and reject Divine Truths; others do not quite deny them, but they doubt and believe but weakly. The Infidels who deny the Fundamentals

damentals of Religion, are not many, but the Number of thoſe who doubt, and are not well perſuaded, is very great. Cauſe I.

This diſcovers to us the Reaſon why Men who are acquainted with the Divine Truths and profeſs to believe them, do yet act quite contrary to the Dictates of Faith and Religion. There ſeems to be in their Proceeding a manifeſt Contradiction: It is a thing wondered at; that People who believe a God, and a Religion, ſhould live as if there was neither God nor Religion; upon this we are apt to ſay, that Sinners are not conſiſtent with themſelves; and as if it were impoſſible to reconcile their Practice with their Belief, we cry out, that the depth of Man's Heart is unſearchable. But there is no ſuch wonder in the Caſe, and the proceeding of bad Chriſtians, is not always ſo contradictory, as it ſeems to be. I confeſs that Men Sin ſometimes againſt the convictions of their own Conſciences, and that ſome who want not Knowledge, do yet Live very Ill.

This may proceed from Inconſideration, from the violence of their Paſſions, from too great a regard to their Temporal Intereſt, from the flattering hope of Pardon, or ſome ſuch Principle. But for the moſt part, Men act conſonantly and ſuitably to their Belief, and it is but ſeldom, that in the Conduct of their Lives, they behave themſelves contrary to the Sentiments and Principles that poſ-

Part I. ſeſs then. We ſuppoſe that bad Chriſtians believe the Truths of Religion, and in that we are miſtaken. Many of them want Faith, and are not fully convinced of thoſe Truths. Is it to be imagined, that ſo many Perſons who live in Sin, who make Conſcience of nothing, and who violate every minute the Rules of their Duty; ſhould be thoroughly perſuaded, that there is a God who ſees them, and to whom they are to give an Account? From all this, I conclude, That the Ignorance of the General Truths of Religion, is one of the principal ſources of Corruption.

Some will ſay, That theſe Truths need not be proved, and that they are of the number of thoſe firſt Principles, which are taken for granted, becauſe they are imprinted on the Hearts of all Men. But this Objection is eaſily anſwered by what has been ſaid juſt now. I own that the Ideas and Principles of Religion, carry in them a natural Evidence, inaſmuch as they are demonſtrable from Reaſon and Conſcience; and becauſe there are Principles in Men by the help of which, they may arrive at the Knowledge of the Truths of Religion. But theſe Principles and Ideas have been in ſome meaſure ſtifled in many, either thro' ill Education, or worldly Buſineſs, or Vice, or ſome other Cauſe; ſo that they feel the force and evidence of them but imperfectly; and ſome have no ſenſe at all of them. Upon this Account it is neceſſary to excite

excite and enlighten thoſe Ideas, to explain and eſtabliſh thoſe Principles. I acknowledge further, That ſome parts of thoſe Proofs upon which Religion is built, lie open to all Mens Eyes; but yet the Ignorant, and thoſe who are taken up with other Objects, do not obſerve them: They ſhould therefore be made to attend to them; juſt as we make ſtupid and heedleſs People take notice of the Beauty of a Palace, or the Skill of an Artiſt in ſome curious Workmanſhip, which would otherwiſe paſs unobſerved by them. However the Opinion of thoſe who pretend that the General Truths ought not to be proved, is contrary to the Holy Scripture; which teaches us to Reaſon upon the Principles of Religion, and to ſearch into the Proofs of them; where in order to convince Men that there is an Almighty and Infinitely Good God, it propoſes to them, the Beauties and Wonders which ſhine in his Works, and exhorts them to the Conſideration of them. This may be ſeen in the Book of *Job.* In the XIX. and CIV *Pſal. Rom.* 1. 19, 20. and in many other Places. Cauſe I.

3*ly*, It may further be ſaid, That the Proof of General Truths, is too difficult for the Common People, and that the Learned only are capable of ſuch a Diſcuſſion. I grant that all ſorts of Perſons are not able to comprehend all that has been Writ upon theſe Matters. And therefore I do not pretend, that

Part I. it is impoſſible to have a true Faith without entring into the Detail of all theſe Proofs, and without following with the utmoſt ſtrictneſs, all the deep and abſtracted Reaſonings, which have been uſed to prove the Exiſtence of God, or the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion. I think rather thoſe Matters ought to be treated with great Diſcretion, eſpecially in Sermons. It would be a great piece of imprudence, to muſter up in a Publick Diſcourſe, all the Objections of Atheiſts, or the Subtilties of Libertines; theſe ought to be referred to Private Conferences. Thoſe who ſpeak to the People, muſt take heed, leſt by Diſputing and Speculating too much, they render the Fundamental Truths problematical, and raiſe Scruples in Mens minds. They ought to build upon this Principle, That Men are carried by a Common and Natural Inclination to believe the Exiſtence of God, to acknowledge a difference betwixt Good and Evil, and to own Providence, and the other Truths of Religion; but for all that, it may be very uſeful and neceſſary to confirm thoſe Truths, to ſet them in the cleareſt Light, and to Convince the People of them.

As to what is ſaid, That the Proofs of the Principles of Religion are not ſuitable to the Peoples Capacity: I anſwer, That moſt of thoſe Proofs are ſuch, that there is no need of being either Learned, or a Divine, to be affected with them. We ought to ſuppoſe here,

here, that the more important any Truth is, Cauſe I.
the clearer and the eaſier the Proofs of it are.
I do not ſpeak of all Truths; there are ſome that are moſt certain, whoſe Proofs are difficult, and above the reach of common Underſtandings; ſuch are many Metaphyſical Truths, and Mathematical Demonſtrations; but at the ſame time, the knowledge of thoſe Truths is not neceſſary, and a Man without danger may be ignorant of them. I ſpeak now only of thoſe Truths which it concerns every Perſon to know, and which are of general uſefulneſs and neceſſity. Theſe are always clear and eaſily proved. And this, by the by, ought on the one hand, to make us admire the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, who has ſo well provided for the Neceſſities of Men; and on the other hand to ſet Bounds to our Curioſity, and to fortify our Faith againſt thoſe Doubts, which might ſtart up in our Minds, by reaſon of ſo many things which we are ignorant of.

As therefore of all Truths, none are of greater Conſequence, or of a more intire certainty than thoſe, which Religion depends upon; ſo the Proof of thoſe Truths ought to be ſimple, evident and ſuited to all Mens capacity. Thus when in order to prove the Being of a God; we alledge, for inſtance, the State and Order in which the World ſubſiſts; when we ſhew that the World cannot be Eternal, and that things had a beginning;

when

Part I. when we eſtabliſh the Inſpiration of Scripture by the Prophecies it contains, which were undoubtedly written before their accompliſhment: When we prove the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion by the Truth of Matters of Fact and Hiſtory, and demonſtrate that if the Facts upon which Religion is founded, are not certain, there is no ſuch thing as certainty in the World, in reſpect of things that are paſt; and that if the Teſtimony of the Apoſtles is rejected, there are no Witneſſes or Hiſtorians, who may not be rejected upon better grounds: When we confirm the ſacred Hiſtory, by the concurring teſtimony of Pagan Writers, and by the moſt Ancient, and the moſt unqueſtionable Monuments, which paſt Ages can afford: When we reflect upon the manner in which the Chriſtian Religion was planted in the World, and upon the alteration it has made in it: When we inſiſt upon the Characters of Truth, Sincerity and Divinity, which are obſervable in the Scripture: In ſhort, when we take Religion to pieces, and make Men ſee and feel, that its Doctrines, its Precepts, its Promiſes, and its Threatnings, have nothing in them that is abſurd or bad, or contrary to our natural apprehenſions; nothing but what perfectly agrees with ſound Reaſon, and the Sentiments of our own Conſciences; and nothing but what is advantagious to particular Perſons, and to Societies: When I ſay, we urge theſe Proofs

Proofs and others like them, and have the Art of propoſing them in a clear and judicious Method, it is certain that they contain nothing that is very difficult. Theſe are the cleareſt and the ſtrongeſt Proofs that can be uſed, in a Subject of this Nature; and the Arguments which are made uſe of to eſtabliſh theſe Proofs, are for the moſt part ſo Natural, and ſo conform to the Ideas of our Minds, and to the Principles of Common Senſe, that there are few even of the Vulgar who may not apprehend them; if not perfectly and in their whole extent, which is reſerved to Men of a larger Capacity; yet ſo far at leaſt as to be ſufficiently ſenſible of their Force. Cauſe I.

If then Difficulties and Obſcurities are to be met with in the Diſcuſſion of the Principles of Religion; it is becauſe this Matter is neglected, and the People are little Informed. But if the ſame care had been taken to Inſtruct Chriſtians in the Fundamental Truths of Religion, which was beſtowed upon Explaining and Clearing Particular ones; they would have another kind of perſuaſion than they have of the Truth of Religion. Theſe great and ſublime Truths, have without compariſon more ſuitableneſs and affinity with the Nature of Men and the Sentiments of their Hearts, than many obſcure, difficult and leſs neceſſary things, which yet have been effectually taught them.

4*ly*, But,

Part I. 4*ly*, But againſt this, Experience may poſſibly be Objected: It may be ſaid, That there are Chriſtians, who moſt certainly have Piety, and yet did never meditate much upon the Foundations of Chriſtianity. I Anſwer, That it is not conceivable, how a Man ſhould be a pious Chriſtian, without being perſuaded of the Truth of his Religion. For at this rate Piety would be but meer Conceit and Enthuſiaſm; and we muſt ſay notwithſtanding all that Scripture and Reaſon tells us to the contrary, that Men are Chriſtians without Knowledge or Reaſon. It cannot be otherwiſe, but that good Men muſt have been convinced of the Truths of the Goſpel, and have had a lively ſenſe, that theſe are the moſt certain and the moſt important of all Truths. If we enquire what Principle it is which produces Piety in the Hearts of the moſt ſimple People, we ſhall find it is an unmoveable Perſuaſion, That there is a God, a Judgment, a Heaven and a Hell; which Perſuaſion is neceſſarily founded upon ſome of the Proofs I have hinted at.

I grant, which no doubt will be Objected to me, That in many this Perſuaſion is not clear enough, and that it is not the reſult of a particular examination; but this does not leſſen the force of my Argument. For though the Perſuaſion of good Men ſhould not be ſo clear and ſo well grounded as it might be, yet it does not follow but that it is ſincere; a Man

Man may be convinced of a Truth, tho' he does not diſcover all the certainty and all the Proofs of it, and tho' he is not able to anſwer all the Objections againſt it. So that ſtill it is trne, that there is no Religion, without the belief of the general Truths of it. After all, we muſt acknowledge, That there are good Men, who are not ſo well Inſtructed upon this Head as it were to be wiſhed. And this defect of Inſtruction, this imperfection of their Faith, is one of the main Cauſes of the defect and imperfection of their Piety. Thus we may frequently obſerve in their Conduct ſuch Weakneſſes and Opinions as do not agree with the pure Light of Faith, and with the exactneſs of the Rules of the Goſpel. This is part of the Unhappineſs we lament, and of that Corruption of which we ſeek the Cauſes. But no Man will diſpute, but that if the ſame Perſons had more Inſtruction, they would carry Virtue much farther than they do. The degree of Piety, does ordinarily follow the degree of Faith: Where there is no Faith, there is no Piety; and where Faith is weak and faint, Piety is languid and defective. This is the general State and Character of Chriſtians at this time; either downright Impiety, or a Piety that is both feeble and imperfect. Cauſe I.

5*thly*, In the laſt place, ſome will perhaps, Object here, That Incredulity is the effect, rather than the Cauſe of Corruption; and that

Part I. that Atheiſm does not produce Corruption, but Corruption Atheiſm. To this, I ſay, that theſe two things do mutually uphold and ſupport each other. Many fall into Infidelity, becauſe their Hearts are vitiated, their licentious way of living takes them off from enquiring into Religion, and hinders their believing of Divine Truths. But it is not leſs certain that one of the great Cauſes, of the Diſorders of Chriſtians, is that either they do not believe at all, or that they believe weakly and confuſedly; and this cannot be reaſonably conteſted.

II. Here is then the firſt and the principal Defect, That Men are not ſufficiently inſtructed in the general Truths and Principles of Chriſtianity. I ſaid that the particular Truths and the Parts of Religion were better known; which does not imply but that in this reſpect too, Ignorance is very great and general.

1. I ſhall not ſcruple to ſay, That there are prodigious Numbers of People, who ſcarce have any Knowledge at all of the Doctrines of Religion. If all Chriſtians were obliged to render an account of their Faith, if they were examined upon the Articles of their Belief, or the main Facts related in Sacred Hiſtory; there would appear in moſt of them, ſuch an aſtoniſhing Ignorance, or ſuch confuſed and intricate Ideas; that one would hardly think them more knowing than if they lived in the darkneſs of Heatheniſm. And what

what Religion, what Piety can we look for among ſuch Men? Cauſe I.

But beſides this groſe and palpable Ignorance, there are ſeveral defects of Inſtruction to be obſerved, even in thoſe who have, or fancy that they have more Knowledge than others. I ſhall particularly take notice of theſe Two.

1*ſt.* Thoſe who exceed the ordinary degree of Knowledge, have yet often but a falſe kind of Light: Either they do not know thoſe Truths which they ſhould know, or elſe they know them not aright. They apply themſelves to things which are not eſſential to Chriſtianity, or which are leſs conſiderable than others which they do not ſtudy. Thus in all Chriſtian Societies, Inſtruction is commonly placed in the Knowledge of the Doctrines and Opinions, particular to every one's own Sect and Party. Whoever is able to debate thoſe Points, and is skilled in Controverſie, is ſaid to underſtand his Religion. Theſe Matters may perhaps have their uſe; but there are other things which Men are more concerned to know, becauſe they are more conducing to Piety; and yet they are almoſt conſtantly neglected. The occaſion of this Error, is that the various importance of the Truths of Religion, is not duly weighed, and that Religion is not ſtudied in an orderly method. Very few Perſons diſtinguiſh between the more and the leſs neceſſary Things,

Part I. Things, between the moſt uſeful Subjects and thoſe which are of little Edification. Moſt Men ſtudy Religion without Rule, and to no purpoſe, and ſo run out upon many unprofitable Subjects. That which is called Learning in Divinity or Knowledge of Religion, is frequently nothing elſe, but a heap of Notions, which have no influence upon Piety, or reſpect to Mens Salvation. It is but a confuſed Medley, wherein the leaſt neceſſary Things, are blended without choice and diſtinction, with the moſt important. I do not ſpeak here of the perplext and unaccurate Ideas which Men often have about theſe Matters; I paſs by the falſe Reaſonings, which are ſometimes uſed to eſtabliſh the Truths of Chriſtianity, as well as thoſe Miſts, which the School-Divinity has caſt upon the Goſpel: I do only obſerve, That the Knowledge which moſt Men have of Religion, is not very fit to make them ſenſible of the Beauties of it; ſo that when all is done, it is no wonder that it ſhould ſeem to many an obſcure, crabbed, unpleaſant and intricate Science, and that it ſhould have ſo little effect upon Mens Minds.

2*dly*, The other fault is, That Men content themſelves with bare Inſtruction, or with the ſimple Knowledge of the Chriſtian Truths, while they are ignorant of their uſe. If they do but know in an Hiſtorical manner, what is believed by Chriſtians, and are able to reaſon

son about it, and to discern Truth from Error, they think themselves sufficiently instructed. But these Instructions do not reach the Heart. Among that small number of Persons who have some Knowledge, there are but few who consider that this Knowledge, is to be directed to a Holy Life, as to its proper end and intendment; and they are fewer yet who actually direct it to that end, and make it subservient to the reforming of their Lives. And so it comes to pass, that a great many of those who are best acquainted with the Truths of Religion, have yet but an imperfect and barren Knowledge of it, and that with all their Attainments, they live still in the darkness of Corruption and Vice. Cause I.

II. Hitherto we have considered Ignorance with relation to the Truths and Doctrines, which the Christian Faith embraces: Let us now view this Ignorance with respect to the Duties which Christianity prescribes. Upon this second Head we shall discover yet a greater Ignorance than upon the first. For after all, something may be done, when we are only to infuse into Men some Knowledge of Truths and Doctrines. It is usual enough to see very ill Men, who in this regard are not destitute of Light. But it is much harder to instruct them in the Duties of Holiness. We may apply here these words of our Saviour's; * *Men love Darkness rather than Light, be-*

* John III. 19, 20.

Part I. *cauſe their Deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reproved.* The Maxims of the Goſpel and the Rules of its Morality condemn Sinners, and therefore they do not care to be informed about them. Thoſe who love the World and their Sins, are glad if they can enjoy the ſweets of theſe without Diſturbance and Interruption: And therefore they will not enquire much into the Moral Precepts of Jeſus Chriſt; they are loth to come at ſuch a Knowledge as would diſcloſe to them the Turpitude of Vice, and breed Diſquiet and Remorſe in them. Ignorance begets Security: The more ignorant a Man is, the fewer Stings he feels in his Conſcience, the more Pleaſure he takes in his Sin. The very ſhadow of Evil frights a well-inſtructed Chriſtian; but Crime it ſelf does not daunt one who is ignorant: He does not hear within himſelf thoſe Alarms or Reproaches, which are either the Preſervatives againſt Sin, or the Remedies of it.

From this it may be judged already, that Men are generally very little Inſtructed in what concerns manners. But that we may the better underſtand how great the Ignorance is in this Matter, it muſt be obſerved, That whoever will perform the Duties of Religion, muſt be perſuaded of their Neceſſity, and acquainted with their Nature. One can-

cannot imagine how they can be practised by a Man, who either does not know them, or does not think them necessary: This is the plain Reason why Men do so little addict themselvs to Piety; they know neither its Necessity nor its Nature. Cause I.

1. As the Foundation of Faith is the Belief of the Truth and Certainty of those Facts and Doctrines which Religion proposes; so the Ground-work of Piety is, to be persuaded of the Necessity of the Duties which Christianity requires: Without this Persuasion, it is impossible for Men to resign up themselves to the Practice of Virtue. Now one would think that all Christians should be fully convinced of this Necessity. For if there is any certain Truth in Christianity, it is this, That the Practice of good Works is Necessary. Good Works do so immediately belong to the Design and the Essence of Religion, that it falls to the Ground as soon as they are taken away: And in proportion as the Necessity of a good Life is weakned, so much is the Power and Beauty of that Holy Religion which Christ brought into the World lessened. Religion contains Doctrines, Precepts, Promises and Threatnings. It does altogether depend upon the Existence of a God, and the Certainty of another Life, and a Judgment to come. But if you banish out of Religion the absolute Necessity of good Works, you attack it in all its Parts, and you undermine its very Foun-

Part I. dations. For this makes the Knowledge of its Doctrines vain and needleſs; it turns its Precepts into bare Counſels; the Promiſes of it, which are conditional, and ſuppoſe Obedience, ceaſe to be Promiſes; the Threats which God denounces againſt Sinners, are but empty Menaces, which God makes only to fright Men, but does not intend to execute. This deſtroys the chiefeſt and ſtrongeſt Proofs of the Exiſtence of a God, and of another Life; it ruins that great Argument for Religion, which is drawn from the difference between Virtue and Vice, and from the Deſerts of both; and it contradicts the Neceſſity, the Nature and Juſtice of the laſt Judgment. All this may eaſily be demonſtrated. This Neceſſity of good Works might likewiſe be proved, from the plain Declarations of the Word of God; and it might be ſhewen, that there is no Truth more clearly and frequently inculcated than this in Holy Writ. But not to engage in theſe Particulars, which do not properly belong to my Purpoſe; I ſhall take it for granted, that a Holy Life is abſolutely neceſſary; for either that is true, or there is nothing true in Religion.

Yet how clear ſoever this Truth may be, it is but little known, and Men are not much perſuaded of it. No Man indeed, does flatly and without ſome preamble deny the Neceſſity of Holineſs; every Teacher profeſſes that to be his Doctrine; all Chriſtians, in ſhew at leaſt,

leaſt, are agreed about it. But when they come to explain their meaning clearly concerning this Neceſſity; when it comes to the Application or to Practice, or when they eſtabliſh other Doctrines, they contradict themſelves, they heſitate upon the Matter, or they explain it with certain Reſtrictions, which ſooth Men in Security, and diſpoſe them to believe that Salvation may be obtained without good Works; which overthrows their Neceſſity. Nay, ſome frame to themſelves ſuch a Notion of Religion as even excludes good Works; this will appear in the following Chapters. Cauſe I.

If it be ſaid, That though this intire and indiſpenſable Neceſſity of a good Life were not ſuppoſed, yet this would not preſently open a Door to Licentiouſneſs, ſince there remain other ſufficient Motives to Holineſs, ſuch as thoſe which are derived from the Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of the Divine Laws, from the Gratitude and Love we owe to God, from the Edification of our Neighbour, and from our Calling and Duty. I Anſwer, that theſe Motives are very juſt and preſſing, and that they neceſſarily enter into that Obedience, which all true Chriſtians pay to the Commandments of God. I acknowledge beſides, that they would be ſufficient to inſpire all Men with the love of Virtue, if they did all govern themſelves by the Principles of right Reaſon and Juſtice. But theſe are not

Part I. the only Motives which ought to be urged; God propoſes others beſides; he promiſes, he threatens, he declares, * *That without holineſs no Man ſhall ſee his Face*, which imports an abſolute neceſſity. And ſurely as Men generally are, there are many of them upon whom thoſe Motives taken from Decency, Juſtice, Gratitude, Duty, or the Edification of our Neighbours, will have very little force. The moſt Honourable Motives are not always the moſt effectual. Man being ſo Corrupt, is ſo many ways, and by ſo ſtrong a Biaſs carried towards Evil. that it is hard for him, without an abſolute Neceſſity, to abſtain from it. But how much leſs will he refrain from ſin; if he is perſuaded that it is not neceſſary to controul his Inclinations, and to confine himſelf to a kind of Life, which appears unpleaſant and melancholy to him? Now as this is the Diſpoſition in which moſt People are, we need no longer wonder, why there is ſo little Religion and Piety among Men.

2. If it is difficult to practiſe thoſe Duties, which we do not think neceſſary, eſpecially when they croſs our Inclinations; it is yet harder to practiſe them, when we do not know them. It is not poſſible to do good or to avoid evil, if we do not know the good that we ſhould do, and the evil we ought to ſhun. Now in this the generality of Chri-

* Heb. XII. 14.

ſtians

ſtians want Inſtruction. Every body ſpeaks of Piety and Virtue, but few Men know what they are. The Common People are little acquainted with the Duties of Religion or the Rules of Chriſtian Morals. This muſt be confeſt, and the Glory of God requires, that we ſhould ingenuouſly own it. I cannot but enter here into ſome Particulars, to prove this Ignorance. Cauſe I.

1. There are ſome Eſſential Duties unknown to a great number of Chriſtians, and which were never thought of by an infinity of Men. I will alledge for an Inſtance one of the plaineſt and of the moſt neceſſary Duties of Morality, and that is Reſtitution. Tho' the Scripture ſhould not expreſly enjoyn it, we need but conſult Reaſon and natural Juſtice to be convinced, that he who has done an injury to another Man by taking from him any part of his Property; is bound to make up that damage, by reſtoring to him whatever he has wronged him of. There is every day occaſion enough to make Reſtitution; nothing being more common, than for one Man to appropriate to himſelf by unlawful means, what belongs to another; and yet in many places Reſtitution is a thing without Preſident. But this we ought not to wonder at, conſidering that there are Thouſands of Chriſtians who never heard a word of this Duty. This matter is ſo little known, and the People are ſo little inſtructed about

Part I. it; that a Treatiſe concerning Reſtitution, written by Mr. *la Placette*, having been publiſhed ſome Years ſince; it has been read as a very ſingular Book, the Subject whereof was new and curious. Nay, ſome have gone ſo far as to cenſure this Doctrine of Reſtitution, pretending that it was novel and too ſevere; ſuch a pitch of Ignorance are Men arrived at in Matters of Morality. And this is not the only Duty which is not underſtood; there are many others beſides, either among thoſe which are common to all Men, or among thoſe which are particular to every Calling, and which it does not appear that Men were ever taught or ever made the leaſt Reflection upon. Now a Man muſt needs neglect the Duties that he does not know.

2. There are divers Sins, which are not commonly ranked among Sins, or which Men do not think to be Damning Sins. Of this number is Lying and Unſincerity, either in Diſcourſe or in Dealings. Among theſe we may alſo reckon Luxury, Sloth, a Soft and Voluptuous Life; many indirect Practices to grow Rich, which are eſtabliſhed and authorized by Cuſtom; Drunkenneſs, which in ſome Countries is not eſteemed a Vice, and all thoſe Sins which are only committed by our Thoughts. Chriſtians now a-days think themſelves innocent, ſo they do not do things manifeſtly Criminal. They conceive that Murther is a Crime, but they do not think

think themselves guilty for passing a rash judgment upon their Neighbours, or taking up unjust suspicions of them. They believe Uncleanness to be a Sin, tho' even some are very indulgent to themselves upon this Head; but impure Thoughts or Sensuality go for nothing with them. Thus there are many Sins which Men are not instructed about, and what wonder is it then, if they commit them without scruple, and if there is so much Corruption in their Manners. Cause I.

3. There are some general Maxims in Morality without the Knowledge of which, it is impossible to have a solid Piety; and yet these are almost universally unknown; especially these Two, which describe to us the Characters of true Holiness. The first is, That a habit of Sin is an infallible token of a Corrupt Man; and that any one habitual Sin which a Man does not forsake, especially when he is warned of it, is enough to shut him out of Heaven. This Maxim is understood but by very few People. Most Men are ingaged in vitious Habits; such as Praying without Attention, Swearing, falling into a Passion, or the like: These Habits grow stronger with Age, Men live and die in them, and yet they think, they die in a State of Salvation. The other Maxim which is neither less important nor better known; is, That there is a vast difference, between Sin and Sin, and between Sinners and Sinners; that the Frail-

Part I. Frailties of good Men are one thing, and the great and wilful Sins of bad Men, another thing. If Men do not apprehend this difference, they will confound Virtue with Vice, and good Men with impious Wretches; and yet this is little obſerved. It is commonly believed that all Men being Sinners, they are all upon the matter in the ſame condition, and do all ſin alike, ſo that there is no great odds between them. Such Notions muſt needs make way for Libertiniſm.

4*ly*, If Chriſtians have ſome Knowledge concerning the Duties of Morality; yet that Knowledge is too general and ſuperficial. They know perhaps in the main, that ſome Sins are to be avoided, and ſome Virtues to be practiſed; but that they only know confuſedly, they content themſelves with ſome general Ideas, which for the moſt part prove uſeleſs and inſignificant. The deſign of Morality, is to regulate Mens Actions, in all the Circumſtances they may be in, and to teach them how they ought to behave themſelves, in all the different Caſes and Emergencies of Life. Now as theſe Caſes and Circumſtances are infinitely various, it is neceſſary that Men ſhould know their Duty with ſome exactneſs, and that they ſhould have Rules at hand applicable to all particular Caſes, by the help of which they may diſcern, what is lawful from what is not. For here ſuperficial Knowledge and general Ideas, will not ſerve the turn;

turn; becauſe they do not determine particular Caſes. Cauſe I.

The Principles of Morality are clear, but it is requiſite to make a juſt Application of them, and to draw right Conſequences from them. Every body acknowledges, that Wrong is not to be done to any Man, but few know what the doing of wrong is. There are innumerable ways of violating Juſtice in relation to our Neighbours, or of getting Money, which are ſinful; and yet theſe are made uſe of every day, and People think that there is no harm in them; and ſo they are guilty of Cheating, Extortion and Injuſtice, and they do not know it. Whence does this proceed but from Ignorance, or from thoſe general and ſuperficial Notions which I have mentioned? This is one of the Reaſons why ſome Books and Diſcourſes of Piety produce ſo little effect, they handle things only in the lump; they treat of Virtues and Vices, of Temperance, of Covetouſneſs and Injuſtice; they exhort and threaten; but they uſually go no further than Generalities, and they ſeldom deſcend to thoſe Particulars, which are ſo neceſſary to inform and direct the Conſcience.

5*ly*. Men are no leſs Ignorant concerning the Degrees, than they are concerning the Parts of Holineſs. Chriſtians are not only obliged to the Practice of many Virtues; but they ought beſides that to practice them in the

Part I. the moſt perfect manner. Our Saviour does not require in his Diſciples a mean and ordinary degree of Holineſs; but he calls them to Perfection. He demands that they ſhould carry Virtue much farther, than either the Heathens or the Jews did, that they ſhould practice Charity, even to the loving of their Enemies; that they ſhould be ſo patient, as to think it their happineſs to ſuffer; ſo humble as chearfully to bear Contempt and Injuſtice; ſo pure, as to baniſh all uncleanneſs from their very Thoughts; and ſo of all the other Virtues. But an infinite Number of Chriſtians, are Strangers to theſe Ideas of Perfection. They never knew the extent of the Duties of Chriſtianity; they have neither tenderneſs of Conſcience, nor elevated Sentiments about Morality. They think they do much, if they obſerve that which is moſt ſimple and eaſie in every Virtue; they confine themſelves to that, and aim at no other Perfection; ſo that ſublime Virtue and Piety are not to be ſought for amongſt them.

6ly, Laſtly Mens Ignorance does not only appear in that they do not know their Duty; but it does likewiſe diſcover it ſelf in this, that they do not know themſelves. The Knowledge of one's ſelf is a Capital point in Religion. For it is not enough to be informed of ones Duty; every one muſt know beſides, whether he obſerves it or not, whether he really has Religion and Piety; for upon

upon this depends the Judgment he is to make of himself, and of his own Condition: Now People are as much in the Dark about this Article, as about the others I have mentioned. The greatest part of Men live without reflecting upon themselves, and in a prodigious unconcernedness about their Spiritual State. They do not trouble themselves to inquire, whether they are of the Number of Good or Bad Men, whether they are in a State of Grace, or of Damnation or not. Or, if at any time they take this into Consideration, they most commonly flatter themselves, by pronouncing too favourable a Judgment upon their own Condition. There are many who boldly rank themselves among Good Men; and yet are not able to give a solid Reason of that Opinion they have conceived of their own Probity and Virtue; Nay they are perhaps actually engaged in Vice and Impiety. If they are but free from noisy and scandalous Sins, if they feel now and then some good Motions, if they have some good Qualities, or an inclination to some Virtues, or an abhorrence of some Vices; that is enough to fill them with a good opinion of themselves. Now when Men are thus blinded by Self-love, and do not know themselves; there is but little hope of them, and they will undoubtedly fall into a state of Security. Cause I.

These Considerations plainly shew, if I am not mistaken, that Men for the most part live in

Part I. in very great Ignorance. But I think my ſelf bound to anſwer an Objection, which may be offer'd againſt what has been ſaid. Some will think no doubt, that it is very difficult for Men, to be ſo well inſtructed as I ſuppoſe they ought to be; and that the People are not capable of ſuch an exact Knowledge of Morality.

To ſatisfie thoſe who make this Objection, and to clear this Matter fully: I obſerve firſt; that by all I have ſaid, I do by no means pretend, that all Chriſtians can, or ought to be equally inſtructed. I know that there are degrees of Knowledge, and that in Morality, as well as in Doctrines, Divines and Men of Parts, go a great way beyond the bulk of Mankind. It is ſufficient for every one to be inſtructed, according to his Capacity and his Condition. But after all it muſt be granted, that the knowledge of the Principles of Morality, is neceſſary to every Body; or elſe we muſt ſtrike ſeveral Precepts out of the Goſpel; unleſs that we imagine that thoſe Precepts, are intended only for a ſmall number of Learned and Subtil Men; which is directly oppoſite to our Saviour's Words, who ſaid, that his Doctrine is deſigned for all Mankind, for the *little ones* and the ſimple, rather than for * *the Wiſe and Prudent.* There is no Chriſti-

* Matth. XI. 25. 1 Cor. X. John VI. 45. 1 Theſſ. V. 20. Phil. IV. 8. 2 Pet. II. 5, 6, 7, 8.

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an but ought to be *a ſpiritual Man and taught of God.* When St. *Paul* ſays, *prove all things, hold faſt that which is good. Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any vertue, if there be any praiſe think on theſe things.* When St. *Peter* exhorts Chriſtians, *to add to their Faith all Chriſtian Virtues, to grow and abound in all theſe Virtues*; ſuch Exhortations do belong equally to all the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity. Cauſe I.

It muſt not be ſaid, that there are Men in the World of very dull and ſhallow Capacities, and that Country People and Mechanicks cannot comprehend all theſe Maxims of Morality. This is not ſo difficult as it is imagined. The Duties of Morality are clear, they preſently affect a Man, becauſe they are conſonant, to the common notices and ſentiments of Conſcience. Chuſe what part of Morality you pleaſe, and you may with due endeavours, make either a Handy-crafts-man, or a Day-labourer apprehend it; ſo you confine your ſelf to the Knowledge and Practice of thoſe Duties which are neceſſary to ſuch People in their ſeveral Callings. Is there any thing more ſubtil or difficult in the Rules of Morality, than there is in a hundred dexterities and ſhifts, which are practiſed in the Affairs of this Life; and which common people

Part I. People can attain too without any great pains? If therefore Mens Underſtandings are ſo groſs and ſtupid in moral Matters; it is not becauſe theſe Matters are above their reach; but becauſe they were never taught them, or never applied themſelves to them. We ought not to judge of what Men might be by what they are. The beſt Ground becomes barren, when it is not cultivated. If things were well ordered among Chriſtians, in relation eſpecially to the Inſtruction of the People, and the Education of Children; the generality of them would not be ſo ſtupid and ignorant as they are. We may therefore conclude, That Ignorance is one of the general Cauſes of Corruption. Chriſtians being ill informed of the Truths and Duties of their Religion; and wanting Inſtruction both as to Faith and Manners, they muſt needs live in a great neglect of Religious Matters.

It may be asked, Whence does this Ignorance proceed? I ſhall obſerve three principal Cauſes of it. The firſt is Education; the way in which Children are bred up, does infallibly lead to Ignorance. The ſecond is the want of means to get good Inſtruction, and particularly the defect of thoſe Inſtructions which are delivered to Chriſtians, in Sermons, Catechiſms, and Books. The third is the Sloth and Careleſneſs of Men, who will be at no pains to acquire neceſſary Knowledge. We might beſtow very weighty Conſiderations

siderations upon every one of these three Heads; but since they will come again in our way, in the sequel of this Treatise, it is enough to have pointed at them in this place, as the three main Sources of Ignorance. In truth, if Men are ill Educated, if they are destitute of the necessary Means of Instruction, and take no care about it; whence should they have sufficient Knowledge? unless they were instructed by Miracles, by Revelations, and Inspirations, they cannot but be Ignorant and Corrupt. Cause I.

But now if Ignorance be the first Cause of Corruption; it is plain that the first remedy to be used against Corruption, is the removing that Ignorance. It is that we are to begin at, if we would bring back Christians, to a Life worthy of the Religion they profess. Exhortations, Censures, and all other such Methods will signifie nothing, as long as Mens Minds are not prepared by proper Instructions.

From all that has been said in this Chapter, it may be gathered, That the right way to instruct Men, is before all things to convince them of the Truth of Religion; and to make them sensible that there is nothing more certain, or of greater Consequence in the World, than the Principles of Christianity. The Belief of the General Truths, ought especially to be well fixed in their Minds; as that there is a God, a Providence, a Judg-

Part I. ment and another Life. After this we muſt proceed to the particular Truths of the Goſpel, and as we go on in explaining them, we ought to ſhew, what influence thoſe Truths have upon Holineſs and Salvation.

But the moſt important thing of all, when theſe Truths are ſettled; is to ſhew, that the bare Knowledge of the Chriſtian Doctrines, is not able to make Men happy; that the ſcope of Religion, is to make Men truly good; and that without Piety and good Works there is no Salvation.

It will not be ſufficient to recommend Sanctification in general, but the Nature of it muſt beſides be diſtinctly explained; it muſt be ſhewed which are the general and particular Obligations of a Chriſtian Life, and what Sins are contrary to theſe. And here thoſe whoſe buſineſs it is to inſtruct the People, ought to be as particular, as poſſibly they can; ſhewing upon each Virtue and Vice what the Nature of it is, and what are the ſeveral Characters, Kinds, and Degrees of it; and propoſing likewiſe the Motives which ſhould diſcourage Men from thoſe Vices, and prompt them to the practice of the oppoſite Virtues; as alſo the Directions which may facilitate the performance of all theſe Duties. When Teachers ſhall go thus to work, they will ſoon perceive ſome Amendment; God's Bleſſing will accompany the uſe of thoſe Means which he has appointed. Chriſtians being

being rightly informed, will of their own accord apply themſelves to Virtue; Corruption will leſſen by degrees; and Chriſtianity recovering its ancient luſtre, will begin to appear with another Face than it does at this Day. Cauſe I.

CAUSE II.

Prejudices and Falſe Notions concerning Religion.

HOW Ignorant and Corrupt ſoever Men may be, they cannot live abſolutely without Religion; very few at leaſt can go ſo far. If they are hindered by their Corruption, to know and practiſe pure Chriſtianity; yet a remnant of Light and Conſcience within them, does not ſuffer them to run themſelves wholly into Irreligion, and to lay aſide all thoughts of Salvation. But to reconcile theſe two Principles, of which one draws them off from Religion, and the other leads them to it; they form to themſelves ſuch Ideas of Religion, as are agreeable to their Inclinations, and flatter their Security; and being poſſeſſed with thoſe Ideas, they confirm themſelves more and more in their Corruption. Theſe falſe Notions and Prejudices are worſe than Ignorance, and prove a greater Obſtacle to the reviving of Virtue and Piety. It is better to deal with Men who are ſimply Ignorant, than with People who have wrong Apprehenſions, and are full of Prejudices. The former being not prepoſſeſſed, may more eaſily be reclaimed; but

but it is much harder to prevail upon pre-ingaged Perſons, eſpecially in point of Religion; becauſe while they maintain their Errors, they fancy they defend the Truth, and that they promote the Glory of God. Falſe Notions and Prejudices in Religion, are therefore one of thoſe Cauſes of Corruption, which it concerns us moſt to take notice of. I ſhall endeavour to point at the chief of them in this Chapter. Cauſe II.

The firſt I ſhall name, is the Opinion of thoſe, who think that Religion is intended only to comfort Men, and to render them happy. And it is no wonder that Men ſhould commonly reſolve all Religion into this. The deſire of Happineſs is natural to Men; and as they are ſenſible upon ſerious Conſideration, that perfect Happineſs is not to be obtained in this World, if it were for no other reaſon but that they muſt die; they ſeek in Religion ſome Conſolation and Remedy, againſt that fatal neceſſity, of quitting all the Pleaſures and Advantages of this preſent Life. Indeed the ſenſe of their Corruption ſhould reſtrain them from flattering themſelves with the hopes of Salvation; but they rely upon the aſſurances of the Divine Mercy, which Religion gives to Men; and they perſuade themſelves, that their Sins will not obſtruct their Felicity. This is properly the Notion which Men entertain of Religion, and that which they think it is good for. I.

Part I. But that Religion ſhould indiſpenſably oblige Men to fear God and to live well, and that without this, there is neither true Religion, nor Happineſs; is that which is not commonly believed.

There is no queſtion but that the Deſign of Religion is to comfort Men, and to lead them to Happineſs. This was God's purpoſe in ſending his Son to redeem the World. But this is not the only end of Religion; it is intended beſides for the Glory of God and the Sanctification of Men; and it does properly conſiſt in the Service and Obedience which are paid to God. Salvation is a conſequence of this Service, and a gratuitous Reward, which God is pleaſed to beſtow upon thoſe, who honour and fear him. Nothing therefore is more abſurd than the conceit of thoſe, who look only upon that ſide of Religion, which promiſes Comfort and Salvation; and nothing is more dangerous or more apt to make Men remiſs and careleſs in their Duty; yet this imagination is very common, and if I was to define Religion, by the ordinary apprehenſions which Men have of it, I would ſay; that it is nothing elſe, but a mean to bring Sinners to Heaven, and to make Men eternally happy, whatſoever their courſe and manner of Life may be.

II. But Men would not ſo eaſily promiſe themſelves Salvation, if they had not very mean and imperfect Ideas of Religion. I ſhall therefore obſerve, *Secondly*,

Cause II.

Secondly, That Men commonly place Christianity, either in bare Knowledge, or in an external Profession, or in Confidence. But Holiness does not make a part of their Notion of Religion, or at best it makes but a very inconsiderable part of it.

It is not to be denied but that Knowledge is Essential to Religion, and that as it holds the first rank in it, so it is the Foundation of it all. Nay it is impossible to engage Men to Holiness, without laying first in them the Foundation of good and sound Doctrine. This I have proved in the first Chapter of this Treatise. An outward and Publick Profession is likewise essential to Religion, for one cannot be a Christian without it. And further, It is beyond all doubt, that Religion inspires Confidence, Peace and Joy. The Knowledge of Christ, and of the Salvation he has procured for us, must naturally produce these effects. Knowledge, Profession, and Confidence, are therefore included in the Idea of Religion, but as necessary as they are, yet they are not sufficient.

Knowledge is not the whole of Religion, since the Gospel as well as Experience teaches us, that it may be found in the worst of Men; it is not therefore a saving knowledge but when it produces Piety and Charity. The Definition which St. *Paul* gives of the Christian Religion, is that it is * *a knowledge*

* Tit. I. 1.

Part I. *of the truth according to godlineſs.* We may read what the Apoſtle tells us concerning that Knowledge which is void of Charity, 1 *Cor.* XIII. As for an outward Profeſſion, it is altogether uſeleſs without Sanctity. A Hypocrite may live in the Church, and perform even with Applauſe, the external Duties of Piety. This we may likewiſe learn from Scripture and daily Experience. Laſtly, All Confidence which is not ſupported by Piety, is vain and deceitful. The bare perſuaſion that one ſhall be ſaved, gives no Man a Right to Salvation. A very wicked Perſon may without any ground rely upon God's Mercy, and this is what Divines call Preſumption and Security.

But tho' all this is very plain, both from Scripture and good Senſe, yet Men entertain Opinions contrary to it. A great many think themſelves Chriſtians, becauſe they know the Truths and Doctrines of Chriſtianity. I do not enquire here, Whether all thoſe who think they know Religion, do really know it? But howſoever this Knowledge true or falſe, makes many judge moſt favourably of themſelves; it does ſo puff them up, that they look on themſelves as the Stays and Supporters of Religion. Others, of whom there is an infinite number, imagine that ſo they profeſs the true Religion, they need not fear any thing concerning their Salvation; eſpecially if this outward Profeſſion is attended with

with ſome apparent Zeal, and ſome aſſiduity in the publick Exerciſes of Religion. Laſtly, It is believed by many, that God requires nothing elſe of Men, but Confidence, and that if they are in that Diſpoſition they cannot come ſhort of Salvation. They think that in order to Salvation, it is enough to acknowledge that they are miſerable Sinners, and to truſt in the Divine Mercy, and in the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. Cauſe II.

This laſt Prejudice which reduces Religion to Acts of Confidence, is perhaps the commoneſt of all. And yet if we were to determine which of theſe Three, *viz.* Knowledge, Profeſſion, and Confidence, is the leaſt eſſential to Religion; we muſt ſay, that it is Confidence. It is a thing unconceivable and contradictory, that a Man ſhould be a Chriſtian without Knowing and without making publick Profeſſion of his Religion: But a Man may be a Chriſtian and a good Man too, and yet want Confidence. For as it frequently happens that a bad Man is animated with a falſe Confidence; ſo a good Man may have a timourous Conſcience, and be poſſeſſed with groundleſs Fears. Sometimes Melancholy, or a want of Knowledge, or of force of Mind, or even Conſtitution, may throw good Men into a State in which they feel no comfort. But without inſiſting upon this; it is viſibly an Error as common as it is pernicious, for Men to pretend, that Knowledge,

Pro-

Part I. Profeſſion, or Confidence, are ſufficient to Salvation, when they are ſeparated from the practice of Holineſs.

It may perhaps be objected, that no Man has theſe Opinions, and that every Body acknowledges, that Religion obliges Men to be Holy. I grant that no Man does expreſly exclude Holineſs; it is confeſſed by all, that the practice of it is neceſſary. But yet I maintain, that it is look'd upon as the leaſt neceſſary thing in Religion. And to prove this; I need but alledge the difference which is made between Knowledge, Profeſſion, and Confidence; and the practice of good Works. The Three firſt are generally preſſed and recommended in another manner than the laſt.

As to Knowledge, it is not without Reaſon repreſented as abſolutely neceſſary; it is ſaid, That a Man muſt know and believe all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith; and whoever denies any one of them, is excluded from Salvation. This neceſſity is extended to many Doctrines, which is not of the ſame importance with Fundamental Truths; many Queſtions are determined, and all theſe Deciſions are made Articles of Faith. If any one raiſes any Doubt about them, he is treated as a Heretick, and People cry out as if Religion was upon the brink of Ruin. So that upon this Head extreme ſeverity is uſed, every Fault is Capital, and no allowance is made for Humane Infirmity.

As

As to outward Profeſſion; the neceſſity of it is openly maintained, and not without juſt Cauſe. In this Point Man's Duty, and the Precepts of the Goſpel are rigorouſly preſſed. The leaſt diſſembling of a Man's Belief, the leaſt Act of unlawful Worſhip, is called Apoſtacy. It is declared, that Men are bound upon pain of Damnation, to forſake and ſuffer all; rather than do any thing againſt their Conſcience. In relation to this nothing is remitted or ſoftned, and the weak and timourous, are no ways indulg'd. Cauſe II.

As to Confidence, it is ſpoken of in ſuch manner, as makes People conceive, that it is the more effectual to Salvation, the firmer it is, and the more removed from doubt. The greateſt Sinner relies boldly upon the Mercy of God, and does not queſtion but that he has a Right to apply to himſelf all the Promiſes of the Goſpel, provided he believe; that is to ſay, as it is meant, ſo he has but Confidence enough.

But when the practice of good Works is Diſcourſed of the Declarations of the Goſpel are not preſſed with the ſame rigor. That Zeal which upon all other Heads hearkens to no Accommodation, becomes here very tractable; and a great deal of remiſneſs appears as to this Article. The Doctrines are preſſed, Publick Profeſſion is ſtrictly enforced, and Confidence is highly recommended: But it is ſaid, That Moral Duties muſt not be ſo ſeverely

Part I. verely urged, and that ſomething is to be allowed for Humane Frailty. And yet is ſeems that as the Scripture inculcates nothing ſo much, as the neceſſity of a good Life; ſo it were neceſſary to inſiſt as much at leaſt upon this Point, as upon any other, and that it ſhould not be rank'd as it is, in the loweſt Degree, and among the leaſt neceſſary things. One would think likewiſe, that the preſſing Sanctification, is to require nothing of Men, but what is as eaſy, if not more, than certain other Duties, which are abſolutely impoſed on them, upon pain of Damnation; ſuch as the forſaking all that is dear to them in this World, and the ſuffering of Death in time of Perſecution. But without enlarging upon this Subject, it is evident, that the generality of Chriſtians, do not believe, that Holineſs is ſo eſſential a part of Religion, as it really is; and that they do not well underſtand the nature of Chriſtianity; from whence it neceſſarily follows, that they muſt neglect the practice of Holineſs.

III. But there are ſome Prejudices, which do yet more directly attack Piety, and they are thoſe which People entertain concerning Piety and Morality it ſelf. I ſhall inſtance this firſt in the Opinion of thoſe, who pretend that Morality, is not of ſuch great moment in Religion, who ſpeak of it with Contempt, and cry it down; and who unreaſonably ſetting Faith in oppoſition to Good-works; maintain,

tain, that it is enough to believe, and that thoſe who inſiſt upon Morals do not apprehend the Nature of the Goſpel. Now one would think that ſuch Abſurd and Unchriſtian Imaginations, ſhould be univerſally rejected; but becauſe whatever gratifies Corruption is uſually welcome to Men; theſe Opinions have their Advocates, even among Divines, as might eaſily be ſhewn from the Printed Works of ſome Authors, who ſeem to have had a deſign to diſparage Good-works, and to oppoſe the neceſſity of Sanctification. This Prejudice overturns the Foundations of Morality, by deſtroying its neceſſity, and rendring it Contemptible. I only give here a hint of it, becauſe I am to ſhew in other Places, that it is the heighth of Extravagance, thus to ſet up Faith againſt Morality, to aſcribe all to the one, and to ſpeak but very ſlightly of the other. Cauſe II.

And yet ſome People do not ſtop here. They think it is dangerous to inſiſt ſo much upon Morality; nay, ſome have proceeded ſo far, as to ſay, This was one of the Characters of Hereſy. I confeſs, this Opinion is not very common. It ought not to be imputed to the People, nor even to the Libertines. None but a few Conceited Divines, have had the face to maintain it, which by the by increaſes the Scandal, that is occaſioned by ſuch Propoſitions. I am willing to believe that thoſe who advance them, qualifie them IV.

Part I. them with ſome Reſtrictions, and that they are not ſenſible of the terrible Conſequences which flow from them; but that they have been betrayed into the Speaking or Writing of ſuch things, either through ſome Prejudice, or through the heat of Diſpute. But after all, if theſe Propoſitions were ſtrictly taken; and ſet out in their true Colours, they could not but be looked upon, as falſe, raſh, ſcandalous, and capable of producing moſt diſmal Effects, eſpeciall, being aſſerted by Divines: And if we did not judge charitably of the Intentions of their Authors, we might juſtly ſay, That thoſe who dare diſparage Morality, and inſinuate, that the preſſing it is a Mark of Hereſy; do themſelves publiſh, a moſt pernicious Hereſy. Can it be a mark of Hereſy to inſiſt upon that, which our Saviour has ſo vehemently preſſed; which is the only thing he inculcates in his Sermon upon the Mount; which the Apoſtles perpetually * urge in their Epiſtles, † and declare to be the end of our whole Religion, and the Character whereby the Children of God are diſcriminated from the Children of the Devil; and without which, both Chriſt and his Apoſtles aſſure us, ‖ that no Man ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

By this, the Truth of Religion is as much

* Matth. V. 6, 7. † 1 Tim. I. 5. 1 John III. 8. ‖ Matth. VII. 21. Heb. XII. 14.

ſtruck

struck at and injured as Piety it self. It gives one an indignation to see, that the Honour of defending Vertue and Piety, should be yielded up to Hereticks. To say that for the most part, Hereticks are strong upon the Head of Morality, is in a manner to give up the Cause; it is the ready way to confirm them in their Errors; and it does basely to ascribe that to Heresy, which belongs to True Religion, and is the Glory of it. It would be to no purpose to alledge, that some Hereticks have writ upon Morality with good Success. For granting this to be true, it is not a Token of their Heresy; on the contrary, so far they are Orthodox. Some Orthodox Christians have recommended Morality as much and better than the Hereticks, because they have established it upon the Foundations and Motives, which pure Doctrines afford. On the other hand, there have always been Hereticks, who did subvert and ruin Morality; as for instance, those who are described by St. *Paul* in the Second to *Timothy*, and by St. *Peter* in his Second Epistle. It is then very unreasonable to say, That a thing which neither agrees to all Hereticks, nor to Hereticks alone, is a Mark of Heresy. There is much more reason to charge those who speak so injuriously of Morality; with maintaining a Heresy, which comes very near that of the *Gnosticks*, who were opposed by the Apostles, and Condemned and Detested by

Cause II.

Part I. by the whole Church, as Corrupters of the Morals of the Goſpel.

V. But tho' the greateſt part of Chriſtians, reject the Opinions I have now mention'd, and acknowledge the Excellency of Morality; yet they form to themſelves too eaſie a Notion of the Duties of it. This is another Prejudice, which does not a little contribute to that neglect of Piety they live in. The Notion of thoſe who think, that the Practice of Piety is eaſy, is true in the main; * *God's Commandments are not grievous:* † *And Chriſt's yoke is eaſy, and his burthen light.* We ſhould therefore always ſuppoſe, that it is not difficult to lead a good Life, and to work out one's Salvation. But the Error lies in imagining, too great an eaſineſs in this, and in not conſidering aright, the Nature and the extent of the Duties of Morality. There are but few whoſe Notions in this Matter, come up to the Standard of the Goſpel, and to that Perfection which Chriſtians are to aim at. Few underſtand to what degree the Practice of Vertue is to be carried: As for the purpoſe; what ſort of Juſtice, Equity, Honeſty, Diſintereſtedneſs, Purity, or Charity becomes a Profeſſor of Chriſt's Religion? Inſtead of riſing up to that high and ſublime Pitch of Morality which the Goſpel demands; and in-

* 1 John V. 3. † Mat. XI. 30.

ſtead

ſtead of being acted by Noble Views and Designs worthy of Chriſtianity; Men commonly take up with mean and ſlight Apprehenſions of it. According to the general Opinion, a very extraordinary and elevated Vertue is not requiſite, in order to be a good Man. It is enough for a Man if he is not a notorious Villain, or a profligate Wretch; and if he obſerve ſome of thoſe Duties which have a ſhew of Sanctity. Thus Holineſs is reduced to the loweſt Degree of Vertue, or rather, to the leaſt degree of Sin; it is brought to very little, and yet that little is often neglected; for Men never go ſo far in Practice as they do in Speculation; they always do leſs than they think themſelves bound to do; ſo that their Actions ſtill fall ſhort of the Idea which they form of their Duty. Cauſe II.

What Judgment then are we to make of Chriſtians now a-days? Tho' they ſhould Act ſuitably to their Notion of Piety and Morality; yet they would diſcharge their Duty but very indifferently, becauſe that Notion is but low and defective. But yet as mean and imperfect as it is, their Practice does not reach it. They frequently allow themſelves in things which are againſt their own Conſcience; and tho' they violate the cleareſt and the eaſieſt Rules of Vertue, yet they fancy thoſe to be Sins from which no Man is free, and which will however be forgiven. At this rate Corruption muſt needs be very great. VI.

Part I. But as Men often form to themselves too easie a Notion of Piety, so they have sometimes too severe an Idea of it. It may perhaps seem at first sight, that it is not very necessary to remark and confute this Prejudice. The general depravation of Manners seems to make it evident, that the Notions which prevail at this time are not the rigid ones, and that Men do not much trouble themselves about the Rules, of too austere a Devotion or Morality. But yet it is usual enough for Men to run into this other extream; and such an excessive severity is not so inconsistent as it may be thought, witth the Corruption of Manners. For tho' many frame to themselves too hard and rigid a Notion of Piety; yet they do not think themselves bound to live according to it, but they leave those Maxims to the Devout, and they imagine that so much Piety is not necessary; so that they fashion to themselves a commodious Religion, and such a Morality as has nothing that is troublesome or difficult in it.

Howsoever there are many who look upon Piety as an austere thing; they conceive it to be an Enemy to all Joy, and that it debars Men of all Pleasure, so that it produces nothing but Sadness, and Melancholy. And they are besides possessed with this Error; that the practice of it is uneasie and difficult, or even impossible. But why do Men judge of Piety with so much Prepossession and Injustice?

Injuſtice? This proceeds from two Cauſes. Cauſe
The firſt is their Carnal Diſpoſition. II.
They are incapable of reliſhing any other Pleaſures, but thoſe of the Body or of this preſent Life, becauſe they are accuſtomed to be governed only by their Senſes; and that is enough to repreſent Piety to them as ſower and diſtaſtful; not only becauſe it does not procure to them thoſe groſs Pleaſures; but becauſe it does likewiſe in many caſes oblige them to renounce them.

The Second Reaſon why Men entertain this Prejudice againſt Piety, is that it is not repreſented to them in its true ſhape. And here firſt, there is a great deal of hurt done by the falſe Pretenders to Devotion; who affect a mournful and ſevere outward appearance, and whoſe behaviour is often intollerably ſtern and ſavage. In the next place, profane Men contribute to this Miſchief; for as they neither know nor love Religion, ſo they make odious Pictures of it, and they take a delight in carrying the Notions of Devotion too far, that it may appear ridiculous.

Thirdly, There are ſeveral well-meaning Perſons, whoſe Zeal being not regulated and ſoftned, by a diſcreet and prudent Knowledge, gives an occaſion to thoſe unfavourable Judgments, which the World paſſes upon Piety. Such People think that it is the Duty of a Devout Perſon, never to be ſeen but in an au-

Part I. ſtere Appearance, and with a dejected look; they are continually cenſuring and never pleaſed; their Zeal is either Superſtitious, Scrupulous, or Ignorant, Sharp, or Unſeaſonable; and ſo it is extremely apt to alienate Mens Minds from Devotion and Piety.

Fourthly, Some Divines and Moraliſts confirm this Prejudice, by their way of recommending the Practice of Piety, both in their Publick Diſcourſes and in their Books. Religion and its Duties, are often propoſed to the People from the Pulpit, in ſuch a ſevere and frightful manner, as is not very fit to make it appear lovely to Men, who for the moſt part, have already a Prejudice againſt it. We find too rigid a Morality, and ſeveral ſtrained Maxims in many Sermons and Books of Devotion. And it may perhaps be of ſome uſe, to give here ſome Inſtances of this kind.

When Worldly-minded Men are told, that Salvation is a moſt difficult thing, and that whoever will obtain it, ought to ſpend his Life in perpetual mourning; This is no great attractive to gain them to the love of Religion. Such Maxims may be true in ſome reſpect; but they are falſe and extravagant, when they are propoſed without Diſtinction or Explication. By the Deſcriptions which are ſometimes made of the Vanity of the World, and of Devotion; one would think, that

that a Man cannot live like a Christian; without laying aside all secular Concerns and Business, and giving up himself to Solitude and Retirement. Now this is what few Men are capable of; and besides it is against the Order of Providence, which has placed us in the World, to live and labour in it, and to enjoy the good things which the Divine Liberality has provided for us. Cause II.

That which is asserted by some Moralists, concerning the Love of God, and their Zeal for his Glory; supposes that Men are obliged, to think actually upon God at all times, and to have a positive intention to promote his Glory in all the Actions of their lives. But such Morality to say no more, is absurd, and impossible to be reduced to practice. It is not possible for a Man to have God always in his thoughts, and to make pious Reflections upon every step he takes, or every word he speaks. And there are such Actions in Life, which cannot without Profanation be referred to the Glory of God by a direct intention. St. *Paul*, indeed enjoyns us,* *to do all things to the glory of God*; But this Rule is not to be taken in the utmost strictness, nor extended to all particular Actions. It is enough to have a sincere and general intention to procure God's Glory, and to do one's Duty upon all occasions. In order to which, these

* 1 Cor. X. 31.

Part I. Four Things are neceſſary. 1. That we ſhould not fail to think of God actually, in all thoſe Actions that require it. 2. That if by reaſon of the preſent State we are in, we cannot think on God at all times, and in all our Actions; we ſhould at leaſt think often upon him, and make frequent Reflections upon our own Conduct. 3. That in indifferent Actions, we ſhould not abuſe our Liberty, but demean our ſelves according to the Rules which the Goſpel preſcribes; and that we ſhould eſpecially have a great regard to the Edification of our Neighbour; it being particularly in that ſenſe that this Commandment *of doing all things to the Glory of God*, is to be underſtood. 4. That we ſhould love God above all things, and that it ſhould be our chief Care and Endeavour to Obey him, and to advance his Glory to the utmoſt of our Power.

How many Scruples have been infuſed into Mens Minds, by ſtraining the ſenſe of this Declaration of our Saviour's, * *Men ſhall give an account at the Day of Judgment of every idle word that they ſhall ſpeak.* What Inferences have not been drawn from this Place, to fill good Men with dread and terror? It is Expounded as if all Diſcourſes, which neither contribute to the Glory of God, nor to the Edification of our Neighbours, nor to the

* Matth. XII. 36.

pro-

promoting of our own Salvation; were those *idle Words*, of which men are to give an Account to God. And yet it does not appear that Words purely idle, are always sinful, or that they deserve the severe threatning which our Saviour denounces here. We cannot forbear talking every Day, of many indifferent things, and holding several Discourses which do neither good nor harm. Indeed if this should grow into a Habit, if we should for the most part speak only of trifling and frivolous Things; it would be a Sin. But I do not apprehend what hurt there can be, in talking now and then of News, of Rain, or of the Weather. Certainly these are not the Words which are meant in this Declaration. The Place where we find it, and the Terms in which it is conceived; do manifestly shew, our Saviour's meaning to be this; That Men shall give an Account at the Day of Judgment, of all the Wicked and Impious Words which they have spoken; and that the *Pharisees* particularly should be answerable to God, for the Blasphemies which they uttered against his Miracles. Cause II.

These strain'd Maxims produce very pernicious Effects. They expose Piety to the Flouts and Contempt of Libertines; and they discourage great Numbers from it. Young People especially, are by this means disgusted with Religion, and they take up an Aversion to it, which they seldom shake off afterwards

Part I. wards. They accuſtom themſelves in that Age which is ſo ſenſible of Pleaſure, to look upon Piety under an auſtere and melancholy Form; whilſt on the ſide of the World and of their Paſſions, they ſee nothing but ſweetneſs and charms. Between theſe two Objects; one of which is ſo enticing, and the other ſo diſguſtful; it is eaſy to imagine which ſide they will chuſe. They run into the embraces of the World with the full ſwing of their Affections. But as to Religion they muſt be urged and driven; and it is much if they can be brought to make ſome ſteps towards it. Even good Men being diſcouraged by this exceſſive ſeverity; do not make that progreſs in Sanctification, which otherwiſe they might. Their Conſciences are diſturbed with troubleſome Scruples and continual Fears. It is therefore very neceſſary to remove this Prejudice; by repreſenting Vertue and Piety, under that eaſy and agreable ſhape which is natural to them; and by propoſing ſuch Ideas of Religion, as may neither on the one hand, produce Security, and lull Mens Conſciences aſleep, nor on the other hand, involve them in groundleſs Scruples.

VII. But if Men are averſe to things auſtere and painful; they are wont likewiſe to deſpiſe thoſe, who they think have ſomewhat in them that is mean and ridiculous. And there are many who have ſuch an Opinion of Pie-

ty:

ty: Which proceeds first from the Ignorance and Corruption of Men; who because they are not well acquainted with Religion, or are possessed with false Notions of Honour; look with Contempt upon every thing, which does not agree with the prevailing Customs and Maxims of the World. And then we may take notice besides, that Libertines do sometimes observe either in that Religion which obtains in the Society wherein they live; or in the Deportment of those who have the reputation of being Devout, several things, which lead them into this Opinion. With relation to Doctrines, they find certain Articles which Men of good Sense cannot digest, and they perceive manifest Abuses in the Worship; they see the People amused with Childish Devotions, which savour of nothing else but Superstition, Credulity or Bigottry. Some of those who do profess Devotion seem to them to hold Opinions, contrary to sound Reason, and to have some odd and ridiculous ways with them. They perhaps, observe in the Ministers of Religion several Whimsies, Ignorances, and Weaknesses; they do not always find the best Sense in Discourses of Piety, neither do they think the Idea which is given them of Religion and it's Duties, to be true, Rational, or Satisfactory. From all this they conclude, that to give themselves up to it, would be a disgrace to them; that it is calculated only for the

Cause II.

Part I. the Vulgar, and for weak Minds; and that the being neither Pious nor Devout, argues a ſtrength and a greatneſs of Soul. This certainly is a moſt falſe and unjuſt Prejudice. There is nothing more ſerious, nor more worthy of Eſteem and Reſpect than Religion, and it is the higheſt pitch of Injuſtice, to take an Eſtimate of it by the Errors and Weakneſſes of Men. But yet this Prejudice is very common.

VIII. Laſtly, We are to rank among the Prejudices and falſe Notions of Men concerning Religion, the Opinions of thoſe who are Infatuated with Myſtical Piety and Fanaticiſm. And it is the more neceſſary to caution Men againſt thoſe Opinions, becauſe they are grown of late Years, to be very common. Fanaticiſm ſpreads very much, and there is ſcarce a Country in *Europe*, where it does not obtain under various Denominations, and where it has not occaſioned ſome Diſturbance.

It would be difficult to give here an exact Account of myſtical Piety and Fanaticiſm. It is a Subject upon which we cannot ſpeak very clearly, becauſe we can hardly have perſpicuous and diſtinct Ideas of it; beſides, that the *Myſticks* are not agreed among themſelves: They are a Sect which is ſub-divided almoſt to Infinity; For not to mention the *Anabaptiſts*, the *Quakers*, the *Quietiſts*, and all thoſe who come up to the heighth of Fanatical Extravagances

vagances; there are many particular Sects which would ſcorn the Name, and yet are wholly, or in part, poſſeſſed with the Principles of the Fanaticks. But in the main here is their Character. Cauſe II.

They are almoſt all agreed in one thing; which is, that they make but very little account of outward Means, and of thoſe Acts which concern the *Exterior* of Religion; ſuch are the Order of the Church, Government, Diſcipline, Preaching, Liturgies, and the publick Exerciſes of Devotion. All theſe, if we believe them, are to be conſidered, as the firſt Elements of Piety, which are uſeful only to imperfect Chriſtians. They have no great eſteem neither for thoſe Labours and Studies, by which Men endeavour to acquire Knowledge. They reaſon little about Religion, and for the moſt part, they alledge no other Arguments for the Articles of their Belief, but the inward Senſe they have of them. They do not condemn Morality and Good-works, but among themſelves, they ſpeak but feebly of them, and in ſuch a ſtrain, as leſſens conſiderably their uſefulneſs and neceſſity. They ſay, That our Works are nothing but Defilement and Abomination; that God does not look upon Works, and that Man ought not to judge of his Condition by them; but that all depends upon Faith, and an Union with God. Hence it is that thoſe Books, which lay a great ſtreſs upon the Practice of Chriſtian

Part I. Chriſtian Virtues, do not reliſh beſt with them. They prefer Contemplations, Meditations and inward Recollections, before an active Life and the Practice of Morality. Nay there are ſome who think, that all the care which Men uſe, and all the efforts that they make to advance in Piety, ſignifie but little. According to them, the way to Perfection and ſolid Vertue, is for a Man to be in a ſtate of *inaction*, to go out of himſelf, to *annihilate* himſelf; to have neither Thoughts, nor Deſires, nor Will, but to be as it were *dead* in the ſight of God; for thus they expreſs themſelves in figurative and myſterious Words. Under pretence of aſcribing all to God, they aſſert, that Man is a meer Nothing, and an *Abyſs* of Miſery; that in order to be happy, it is enough for us to be ſenſible of our *Nothingneſs*, and to wait in *Silence* and *Tranquility*, till God is pleaſed to work his Will in us; and that when the Soul is thus in the State of *inaction*, and intirely abandons it ſelf to God, then it is, that God ſpeaks to, and operates in it. What they ſay concerning Man's *Nothingneſs*, does not hinder but that moſt or them pretend to be in a State of Perfection, and look upon the reſt of Chriſtians, as Carnal Men, who are yet in darkneſs, and who never taſted that which they call the *Heavenly Gift*. I might relate here there refining upon Divine Love and upon Prayer; but what I have ſaid is ſufficient, to diſcover the

the Spirit and Character of Fanaticiſm. Cauſe II.

I am far from diſcharging all thoſe who hold theſe Opinions, with Hypocriſy and Impiety; I am perſuaded that there are good Men amongſt them, who are not ſenſible of their Errors; ſo that I cannot but blame the ſeverity which is uſed towards them in ſome Places, and the odious Imputations that are caſt upon them in order to vilify them all, without diſtinction. If they err, it is for the moſt part, thro' Weakneſs and Prepoſſeſſion, rather than thro' Malice.

Nay it may be ſaid in their behalf, that theſe Illuſions would not have grown ſo Common, if there had not been a general, and in ſome meaſure an incurable Corruption in the World. But they ſaw every where a prodigious decay of Piety, and little hope of amendment. For what may we not ſay of the preſent State of Chriſtianity? There is in many Places an Ignorant and Superſtitious Clergy and People; whoſe whole Religion conſiſts, in Ceremonies, and in Devotions, which are merely External, and often Ridiculous; above all, there appears in thoſe Places a Deluge of immorality. Is it then to be wonder'd at, that Quietiſm and Fanaticiſm ſhould rear up their Heads in ſuch Places? Theſe groſs Abuſes do not indeed prevail every where; but generally ſpeaking, there is but little of true Piety among Chriſtians, there is ſcarce any Order or Diſcipline left amongſt

Part I. mongst them; Men live as they please; the Sacraments are prophaned; the Precepts of the Gospel are trampled under foot; Charity and Honesty are almost entirely banished. No Man sets about the redressing of these Disorders; Church-men make it their Capital Business, to maintain their Disputes and their Tenets, and they apply themselves but faintly to the reforming of Manners. Religion being upon this Foot, many who had good Intentions, could not but perceive that this was not true and genuine Christianity. But because they saw no likelihood of Things being brought to a better posture; or because they wanted Capacity to find out the Occasions and Remedies of so great an Evil; or lastly; because they were Men of weak parts, they hearkned to those who proposed to them this Mystical Piety.

This is the Cause of the progress of Fanaticism, and the Reason why some Persons of Virtue and Piety are engag'd in that Party. And therefore the true way to reclaim them would be to re-establish Order in the Church, and to labour for the Reformation of Manners. As long as these are neglected, all the Precautions and Methods used against Fanaticks by the Clergy, or by the Magistrate, will either prove unsuccessful, or be found contrary to the Spirit of Christianity.

But

But after all, this Spirit of Fanaticiſm is highly pernicious. For firſt it opens a Gap to all manner of Licentiouſneſs. Not to mention the Miſchiefs which may redound from thence upon Civil Society; Myſtical Piety is a large Fountain of Illuſions; it leads Men into endleſs Errors, and it is apt to turn all Religion upſide down; for as it is lodged only in inward Sentiments it cannot happen otherwiſe, but that vaſt Numbers of Men who either want Knowledge or Strength of Parts, will take the wandrings of their own Fancies for Divine Inſpirations. I know that ſome of thoſe Contemplative Men, acknowledge the Scripture for the Rule of their Faith, and read it carefully; but the miſchief is, that thro' their Prejudices, they fix a wrong Senſe upon it, ſo that what they read does but confirm them in their Errors. Their Expoſitions are very ſingular; they do not affix to Words the ſame Ideas which other Men do; they forſake the literal ſenſe, to run after myſtical Explications ſuitable to their preconceived Notions; they reject or make very light of thoſe Helps which the Knowledge of Languages, Hiſtory, and the ſcope of Sacred Writers, afford; and it is one of their Principles, That Women, Mechanicks, and the moſt ſimple People, are able to underſtand the Scripture as well, if not better, than the moſt Learned Doctors. Cauſe II.

2. Fanati-

Part I.

2. Fanaticiſm is an Evil which is hardly to be remedied: A Heretick, or a prophane Perſon, may ſooner be undeceived, than a Man intoxicated with Myſtical Devotion; for theſe will Reaſon, but the other will hearken to no Reaſoning; ſo that he is Proof againſt all the Arguments which can be offered to him. It is in vain to Diſpute with People, who look on all thoſe who are not of their Mind, as Ignorant Men; who think themſelves Illuminated above the reſt of Mankind, and who return no other Anſwer to the Objection urged againſt them; but that they are otherwiſe perſuaded in their Minds. There is no good to be done upon them; either by Reaſoning or by Senſe, of which they make but little uſe; or even by the Scripture, wherein they ſeek nothing leſs, than the literal meaning.

3. Tho' Myſtical Men profeſs a ſublime Piety; yet their Principles favour Corruption more than one may be apt to imagine. How can we reconcile thoſe Maxims concerning *Contemplation*, *Inanition*, and *Silence*, with that Activity, Zeal, and Fervour which the Scripure recommends? If a Man is a meer Nothing, if he is to wait patiently till God works his Will in him, and ſpeaks to his Soul; it is in vain to exhort Men, and it would be to no purpoſe for them to uſe any endeavours on their part. Beſides, that Contempt of outward means which the *Myſticks* expreſs

expreſs, makes way for a total neglect of Devotion, introduces Diſorder and Licentiouſneſs, and is directly oppoſite to God's deſign, who thought fit to preſcribe the uſe of thoſe means. I might add, that the Principles of Fanaticiſm are commodious enough for Sinners, ſo that I do not wonder, that ſome of them ſhould go over to that Party. A Devotion which conſiſts in acknowledging a Man's own *Nothingneſs*, or in *Contemplation* and *Silence*, is much more acceptable to a Corrupt Perſon, than an exact Morality, which obliges a Man, to do acts of Repentance, to put his own hand to the work, and to ſet about the reforming of his Life, and the practiſing of Chriſtian Virtues. Cauſe II.

Upon the whole matter, Fanaticiſm, makes Religion contemptible; becauſe the Men of the World confound true with Myſtical Piety. They fanſy that a Man cannot be Devout, without being ſomething Viſionary and Enthuſiaſtical; and that Devotion does not well agree with Senſe and Reaſon.

The Prejudices I have mentioned in this Chapter, are not the only ones which foment and cheriſh Corruption; ſome others might have been added, but they may more conveniently be ranged under the Titles of ſome of the following Chapters. What I have ſaid in this, does yet farther ſhew the neceſſity of good inſtruction; which may conquer theſe Prejudices, and give Men true Notions of Religion and Piety.

CAUSE III.

The Maxims and Sentiments which are made uſe of to Authorize Corruption.

Part I. IT has been ſhewn in the two preceding Chapters, that Men are generally involved in Ignorance, and that they entertain ſuch Notions concerning Religion and Piety, as muſt of neceſſity maintain Corruption in the World. But they are likewiſe poſſeſt with divers particular Maxims and Sentiments which lead directly to Libertiniſm. A modern Author very well obſerves; * *That People are not only very little acquainted, with the extent of that Purity which the Goſpel requires but that they are beſides full of Maxims, incomparably more pernicious, than Errors of pure Speculation.* Theſe Maxims do the more certainly produce Corruption, becauſe they are uſed to authorize and countenance it. And in fact, Mens Blindneſs and Licentiouſneſs are come to that paſs; that not being contented with the practice of Vice; they do beſides plead Authority for an ill Life. They proceed ſo far as to defend the Cauſe of Cor-

* *New Moral Eſſays*, Tom. 1. in the Preface.

ruption

ruption; they Diſpute with thoſe that condemn them, and they vent ſuch Maxims and Sentiments, as (if we believe them) will juſtifie, or at leaſt excuſe all their Diſorders. I could not omit here the examining of thoſe Maxims, ſince their effect is ſo pernicious; I ſhall therefore obſerve them as the third Cauſe of Corruption. Cauſe III.

The Maxims and Sentiments which favour Corruption are of two ſorts. Some are viſibly Profane and Impious; ſuch are a great many Maxims of the Libertines, which go for Currant in the World: But there are others which Men pretend to draw from Religion. I ſhall inſiſt particularly upon the latter, becauſe as they are taken from Religion it ſelf, they are by much the more dangerous. When profane People undertake to defend Vice with Maxims which are manifeſtly impious, we ſtand upon our guard againſt them, and we may confute them by the Maxims of Religion. But when they employ Religion and the Truths of it, in the defence of Vice; the danger of being ſeduced is infinitely greater.

I ſhall reduce the Maxims which are made uſe of to authorize Corruption to theſe Four Orders.

I rank thoſe in the *Firſt* Order, by which Men endeavour to prove, that Holineſs is not abſolutely neceſſary.

The *Second* Order contains thoſe which tend to ſhew, that the practice of Holineſs is impoſſible.

Part I. The *Third* comprehends those which insinuate, that it is dangerous for a Man to apply himself to Good-works.

The *Fourth* and the *Last* includes those which are alledged to excuse Corruption.

But as it is not less necessary, to know the Remedies against Corruption, than to discover the Causes of it; I shall not only mention, but as I go on Confute those Maxims.

I. Although nothing is more clearly asserted in the Gospel, than the necessity of Good-works; yet Christians entertain many Opinions which destroy this necessity, and which consequently open a Door to Licentiousness. The necessity of Good-works cannot be overthrown but one of these two ways; either by saying, that God does not require them; or else by maintaining, that tho' God requires them, yet a Man may be Saved without the practice of them.

1. In order to prove that God does not require Sanctity and Good-works, as a Condition absolutely necessary to Salvation, these two Maxims are abused. 1. *That we are not saved by our Works.* And 2. *That Faith is sufficient to Salvation.* The first of these Maxims is intended to exclude Good-works; and by the second Men would substitute another Mean for obtaining Salvation. I referr the Discussing of these Two Maxims to the next Chapter, because they are drawn from the Holy Scripture.

II. Men

II. Men endeavour to perſuade themſelves, that tho' they neglect Holineſs, yet for all that, they ſhall not be excluded from Salvation. And that which contributes moſt to flatter them in this Imagination, is firſt, The Notion they have formed to themſelves of the Mercy of God. *God*, ſay they, *is Good, and will not judge us with the utmoſt rigour.* This is ſaid every day, and it makes every Body hope for Salvation. The Divine Mercy indeed is without queſtion, the only ground we have to hope for Salvation. But the vileſt Affront we can offer to that Mercy, is to make it an occaſion of Security. Becauſe God is Good and Merciful, muſt not we therefore endeavour to pleaſe him? May we freely offend him, becauſe he is Good, and we hope he will forgive us? Cauſe III.

Thoſe who Reaſon at this rate, underſtand very little what the Divine Mercy is. They muſt ſuppoſe that it extends indifferently to all Men without any regard to their Obedience or Diſobedience. But this Suppoſition is evidently falſe, and contrary to the Holy Scripture. The Effects of God's Mercy, are promiſed only to thoſe who fear him and depart from evil; and by conſequence, it is a falſe and pernicious Maxim, to ſay, *So much Holineſs is not neceſſary; God is Good, and he will not mark ſeverely what is done amiſs.* This is to aſcribe to God an eaſineſs and a connivance,

Part I. vance, utterly unbecoming the Sovereign Judge of the World.

It is ſaid beſides, *That God will not judge us rigourouſly.* That indeed, is true; God is indulgent towards us, and the Goſpel is a Covenant of Grace, in which God has a great regard to our preſent Condition, and Weakneſs. But it is likewiſe certain, that God will judge us according to the rigour of the Covenant of Grace; and that no Salvation is to be had for thoſe, who do not fulfil the Condition of the Goſpel; now this Condition, is a true Faith, inciting us to Holineſs. This muſt be granted, and we muſt acknowledge the neceſſity of performing this Condition, and of leading a Holy Life; or elſe the Goſpel is but a Jeſt; and we muſt ſay, That God does not ſpeak ſeriouſly in it; that indeed he preſcribes certain Conditions, that he Commands and Threatens; but that nothing of all this is to be ſtrictly underſtood; ſo that tho' a Man does not comply with the Conditions which God requires, yet he ſhall feel the Effects of his Clemency. If this is true, there is an end of the Chriſtian Religion.

2. It will no doubt be replied, *That provided a Man Repents, and asks God's forgiveneſs, he ſhall be Saved.* This is an unqueſtionable Truth; ſo by Repentance we mean that, which the Goſpel requires, and which conſiſts in a ſincere deteſtation of Sin, in true Converſion and Amendment of Life. But this

this is false, if by Repentance, we mean only a general Confession of Sins, accompanied with some sense of grief and fear, whereby Sinners hope at the Hour of Death, to attone for all the disorder of a Vitious Life. I would shew here that this is no saving Repentance, but that I am to handle this Matter purposely in another Chapter. Cause III.

If Men commonly neglect those things, which are not very necessary; they apply themselves much less, to those which they think to be impossible. Now this is the Notion which Men commonly have of Piety. It is said first, *That it is impossible for a Man to be so Holy, and to do that which God Commands.* A great many like the Precepts of the Gospel very well, and acknowledge their Justice and Excellency, *Would to God*, say they, *we could live thus, but we are not able to do it:* And being possest with this Opinion, they use no endeavour to practise those Duties which they own to be Just; or to attain to that Holiness, to which God calls them. And indeed, what Man would attempt that, which he looks upon as impossible. II.

Now what is said of Man's Incapacity to do good, is very true, when we speak of Man considered barely as Man, in the corrupt State of Nature. But the Question is, Whether those whom God has rescued out of that State, and called to the Communion of the Gospel, are incapable to arrive at that degree

Part I. of Holineſs, which he requires of them? The Apoſtles gives us another Notion of thoſe who know and believe in Jeſus Chriſt. They repreſent to us indeed the miſerable Condition in which Men naturally are, and the greatneſs of their Corruption; but they tells us at the ſame time, that Chriſt is come to deliver them from that State, * *that a Chriſtian can do all things through Chriſt, that ſtrengtheneth him:* † *That he is perfect and throughly furniſhed to all good works:* || *That he who loves God keeps his Commandments, and overcomes the World.* This plainly imports, that we are no longer in that State of Corruption and Death, wherein Man being left to himſelf, is a ſlave to Sin; or at leaſt that we ought to be no longer in that State, after all that which the Grace of God has done for us. It is the greateſt Injury, that can be done to Chriſt and his Grace, to ſay, That his Coming, his Death, his Goſpel, and his Spirit, are not able to Sanctify Men; and that after they are Redeemed and Adopted by God, it is impoſſible for them to be good, and to do what he Commands.

If this was true, where would be the Power of the Chriſtian Religion, and what could we think of God's proceeding when he addreſſes his Commandments to us? At this rate, he gives us a Law, not that we ſhould keep

* Phil. IV. 13. † 2 Tim. XI. 21. || 1 John ver. 34.

it;

it; but rather to convince us that we cannot observe it. In this Caſe, what will become of our Saviour's Precepts, and what are we to think of thoſe pure and exalted Morals which he has left us? Evangelical Holineſs will be nothing elſe but an imaginary and unpracticable Sanctity. Thoſe Ideas of Perfection will be but meer Ideas, without any reality; like thoſe of that Philoſopher, who form'd a fine Scheme of the beſt Government of a Common-wealth; but it was a Project which could never be executed. It were to be wiſhed, we might remember, that, Thanks be to God, we are no longer Heathens; and that Men ſhould be encouraged, and not diſheartned by extravagant Maxims and Diſcourſes. Which is the imitating thoſe Cowardly Spies, who after they had viewed the Land of *Canaan*, went about to diſpirit the *Iſraelites*, and to perſuade them, that the Conqueſt of that Land was impoſſible. Cauſe III.

2. It is not only ſaid, That we are not able to be ſo Holy as the Goſpel requires; but it is added beſides, *that God would not have us be ſo; that he makes uſe of Sin to keep us humble, and to make us feel the conſtant need we have of his Grace, as well as to kindle in us, the deſire of a better and more perfect Life.* This Maxim repreſents Corruption as a thing unavoidable, agreeable to the Will of God, and in ſome meaſure uſeful. But what can be more falſe than to pretend, *that God would*

not

Part I. of Holineſs, which he requires of them? The Apoſtles gives us another Notion of thoſe who know and believe in Jeſus Chriſt. They repreſent to us indeed the miſerable Condition in which Men naturally are, and the greatneſs of their Corruption; but they tells us at the ſame time, that Chriſt is come to deliver them from that State, * *that a Chriſtian can do all things through Chriſt, that ſtrengtheneth him:* † *That he is perfect and throughly furniſhed to all good works:* || *That he who loves God keeps his Commandments, and overcomes the World.* This plainly imports, that we are no longer in that State of Corruption and Death, wherein Man being left to himſelf, is a ſlave to Sin; or at leaſt that we ought to be no longer in that State, after all that which the Grace of God has done for us. It is the greateſt Injury, that can be done to Chriſt and his Grace, to ſay, That his Coming, his Death, his Goſpel, and his Spirit, are not able to Sanctify Men; and that after they are Redeemed and Adopted by God, it is impoſſible for them to be good, and to do what he Commands.

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2. It is not only said, That we are not able to be so Holy as the Gospel requires; but it is added besides, *that God would not have us be so; that he makes use of Sin to keep us humble, and to make us feel the constant need we have of his Grace, as well as to kindle in us, the desire of a better and more perfect Life.* This Maxim represents Corruption as a thing unavoidable, agreeable to the Will of God, and in some measure useful. But what can be more false than to pretend, *that God would*

not

Part I. *not have us to be Holy?* Why then does he Commands us to be ſo? Why does St. *Paul* ſay, **This is the Will of God, to wit, your Sanctification?* What can be meant by theſe Words of St. *Peter*, † *As he who has called you is Holy, be ye alſo holy in all manner of Converſation; for it is written, be ye holy, for I am Holy?* If it be ſaid, that God would have us to be Holy, but not perfectly Holy, as we ſhall be in Heaven: I ask no more, Who did ever pretend that we ought to be as Holy in this World, as we are to be in the Life to come? Nothing elſe is required of Men, but that they ſhould be as Holy, as God would have them to be, and as Holy as his Grace enables them to be in this Life. To alledge againſt this, *That God would not have us be ſo Holy*; is a ridiculous Evaſion, which implies a Contradiction. Beſides, this Maxim taken in that Senſe, which it firſt offers to the Mind, ſeems to make God the Author of Sin. For it ſuppoſes, not only that God would not have us to be ſo Holy, but which is more ſtrange, that he wills the contrary, that he has his Views, Deſigns, and Reaſons, why he ſhould not permit us, to attain that degree of Holineſs, to which the Goſpel calls us. That is the meaning of theſe Words, *That God makes uſe of Sin, to keep us humble, to make us feel the need we have of his Grace, and to make us*

* 1 Theſſ. IV. 3. † 1 Pet. I. 15, 16.

long

ng for another Life. If it was said only, Cause III.
hat God had some Reasons to permit Sin:
ch an Assertion would be true; but those
ho alledge this Maxim, to excuse themselves
om obeying the Gospel, ascribe to God a
sitive Design; and a direct Intention, which
nders that Obedience impossible; which
rogates from his Holiness and Justice, and
hich is manifestly contrary to those Decla-
tions which he himself has made in Scrip-
re. If it were further said, That our Sins
ught to humble us, and that they should
rve to make us wiser, and more circumspect
r the time to come, and to raise in us a long-
g after a happier State; this would be very
easonable. But it does not follow from
ence, that we are to ascribe to God, those
iews and Intentions which this Maxim as-
ibes to him. There is a vast difference be-
ween the Design which God proposes to him-
lf, and the Event of Things. These two
ould never be confounded. Neither ought
he natural Effect of Sin, to be confounded
ith the Consequences of it. The natural
ffect of Sin can be no other but Evil; if the
onsequences of it are not always fatal, and if
len reap some advantage from it, that is,
s we say, by accident. However God has
o need of Vice to form us to humility; he
as other means to humble us, and to make
s feel the need we stand in of his Grace;
ithout being necessitated to let us live under
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Part I. the Dominion of Sin, to produce those Dispositions in us. And there remain still even in the very holiest Men, matter enough for them to have recourse to the Divine Mercy, and to aspire to a better Life, notwithstanding all the progress they can make in Holiness. This will be fully cleared in the sequel of this Chapter.

3. Here is another Maxim which is pretty common; it is said, *That this World is the place of Corruption, that this Life is the time of Sin, and that Holiness is reserved for Heaven.* Mens Minds are so infected with this imagination; that we hear it said every Day, even by those who have some Piety; *That we live in this World only to offend God, and that we do nothing but sin.* But certainly, nothing is more contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel than this: For tho' it is true, in a sound sense, that this World is the place of Corruption, and that Sin will never be intirely abolished but in Heaven; yet that does by no means excuse us from serving and fearing God as long as we live here. The first thing a Christian ought to know; is that God has placed him in this World, not to offend, but to glorifie and serve him. The Gospel tells us, every where, that this Life is the time which God gives us to sanctify our selves in. That this Earth is the Place where Christian Vertues are to be practised; that now is the time to labour, *to walk, to fight*, and *to sow*

we intend to obtain Salvation; and that whoever neglects theſe Duties ſhall be ſhut out of Heaven. In the Life to come theſe Opportunities will be over, the Door will be ſhut, and the Sentence which God ſhall pronounce at the Day of Judgment, will be founded upon that which Men do in this Life. Cauſe III.

Nay, we may draw an Argument from the Nature of Holineſs it ſelf, to demonſtrate, that the practiſe of it is not referred to another Life. The greateſt part of the Duties which God preſcribes; ſuch as Repentance, Patience, Chaſtity, Sobriety, Almſgiving, and Hope, cannot be practiſed in Heaven. Here then, is the Time, the Place, and the Opportunity, to perform theſe Duties. Let us reflect upon what St. *Paul* ſays, in his Epiſtle to *Titus*, Chap. 11. There he declares, *That the Grace of God which brings Salvation, teaches Men to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* That is, in this Life, and upon Earth; and then he adds, *looking for that bleſſed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* He makes a diſtinction between the Duty, and the Hope of a Chriſtian; between this World and that which is to come. This Life is the time, and this World the place, wherein we ought to practiſe Temperance, Juſtice, and Godlineſs. It muſt not be asked, Where the difference then lies, between this Life and the other, between Grace and Glory? For

Part I. For the difference is great and ſenſible enou in other Reſpects. In the next Life we ſh be perfectly Holy; our Holineſs will be another Nature than it is here; we ſhall like the Angels, and as we ſhall practiſe longer a great many Duties, which we pr ctiſe here on Earth, ſo we ſhall exerciſe m ny Vertues, which cannot be exerciſed this Life.

4. I ought not to omit here another M xim, which is not only very common, b is likewiſe moſt pernicious, by reaſon of t uſe that is made of it. Some ſay, *That the was always, and that there will always be C ruption; that this is the way of the World, th Men will always be Men, and that the Wor will not change.* It is neceſſary to dwell a li tle upon this Maxim, becauſe it is ſpecio and tends as well as the former, to ma Men believe that Corruption is neceſſar and unavoidable. It has beſides a gener Influence upon the Subject Matter and Deſig of this Book; for it is to little purpoſe t deſcant upon the Sources of Corruption, there is no amendment to be hoped for, have Four Things to ſay upon this Maxim.

1. The Inference which is made from it abſurd. For tho' an Evil is general, it does n follow, that it is to no purpoſe to ende vour to keep our ſelves free from it; unleſs were an Evil from which Men could not po ſibly preſerve themſelves. There have be alwa

always and there will always be Diſeaſes in the World; and yet no Man hithereto has been ſo weak as to maintain, that the Precautions and Remedies which are uſed againſt Diſeaſes, are altogether uſeleſs. Thus tho' Corruption reigns in the World; yet that does not hinder, but that Men ought to uſe thoſe means which God affords them to that end. Cauſe III.

2. This Maxim is founded upon a falſe Suppoſition. For tho' it is true, that there has been always, and there always will be Corruption in the World; yet it ought not to be ſuppoſed, that this Corruption is alike at all times, or that things are always to be in the ſame ſtate they now are in. This were a falſe Suppoſition and contrary to Experience, as may eaſily be proved with reſpect to the Time paſt, the preſent, and the future. Firſt, when we reflect upon paſt Ages, we cannot ſay that all Times have been alike, in reference to Religion. It is not to be denied, but that before Chriſt's coming, the World was plunged in a general Corruption, and that the State of it has been conſiderably altered by the Preaching of the Goſpel. Can any one deny but that the Primitive Church was purer, than the Church which we find in the Ninth or Tenth Century? At this Day, tho' there is a general Diſſoluteneſs, yet there is more or leſs Corruption in ſome places than in others. It is true in Fact, that where the

Goſpel

Part I. Goſpel is duly Preached, and where there is ſome Order and Diſcipline left, there appears more Piety and Religion than in other Places. As for the time to come we muſt not think it impoſſible to reſtore things to a better State, or imagine that the World will always continue as it is, tho' the Means were uſed which God has appointed to Reform it. For this will no ſooner be done, but Corruption will abate; as I hope to make it appear, in the Second Part of this Book.

3. This Maxim is directly contrary to the Word of God. The Scripture often ſpeaks of the Corruption of the World, but does it always in ſuch a manner, as gives us to underſtand that Chriſtians may, and ought to renounce it. St. *Paul* ſpeaks of the ſinful Courſes which the World lies in, *Eph.* II. But he ſuppoſes, that the *Epheſians* did no longer follow thoſe Courſes after they were Converted to the Chriſtian Religion. The ſame Apoſtle Commands us, * *not to be conformed to this preſent World.* And St. *James* when he deſcribes the Spirit and Character of that † *pure and undefiled Religion*, which is acceptable to God, he tells us, among other things, that it conſiſts *in a Man's keeping himſelf unſpotted from the World.*

4. In the laſt place, this Maxim is extreamly dangerous. In that Senſe and Deſign it

* Rom. XII. 2. † James I. 2, 7.

which

which it is propoſed, it leads to Impiety, it robs Religion of all its Power, and it furniſhes Libertines with a Plea, which does intirely juſtify them. For in ſhort, either Corruption may be remedied, and Men may be reduced to a more Chriſtian Life; or it may not. If it cannot be remedied, this Maxim is true, and prophane Men are in the right. But in that Caſe, I ſay it again, Religion is but a Name; for if no ſtop can be given to Corruption, if things muſt ſtill go on at the ſame rate; why do we talk of Religion, or why do we preach the Goſpel? We may teach and exhort as long as we pleaſe, but for all that, there will be neither more nor leſs Sin; Men will always be what they are, and the World will not alter. What Notion muſt this give us of the Efficacy of Chriſtianity, or of the ſincerity of its Precepts, Promiſes and Threatnings? I grant then, that Corruption is great, that the courſe of the World is very bad, and that in all probability, there will always be Wickedneſs upon Earth. But that this Corruption ſhould be always the ſame, ſo that no Reformation can be hoped; is what cannot be maintained without affronting Religion, without introducing Fatality and extinguiſhing all Zeal among Chriſtians. Cauſe III.

III. By the Maxims we have hitherto Examined, Men endeavour to prove, that the practice of Holineſs, is either of no great neceſ-

Part I. ſity, or that it is impoſſible. But there are ſome others, which repreſent the Study of Vertue, as dangerous; ſo that here vicious Men do not ſtand barely upon the defenſive part, but they attack their Adverſaries, who recommend the Duties of Holineſs.

1. They pretend, that we cannot inſiſt ſo much upon Works, without obſcuring the Glory of the Divine Mercy. *We muſt aſcribe all*, ſay they, *to Mercy, and nothing to our own Righteouſneſs.* There is no true Chriſtian, but acknowledges, That our Salvation is entirely owing to the Divine Mercy; and rejects the Opinion which attributes any Merit to Good-works. It is that Mercy which gave us Chriſt for our Redeemer, and our Salvation is founded upon that Redemption. It is that Mercy which pardons the Sins of thoſe who Believe and Repent, and which bears with the Infirmities of Regenerate Chriſtians. And it is from the ſame Mercy, that we expect that Glorious and un-meritted Reward, which is laid up in Heaven for good Men. All theſe are ſo many Acts of the pure Mercy of God. But as we have ſhewed that the Mercy which Saves us, does not excuſe us from Good-works, ſo the neceſſity of Good-works, does not leſſen in the leaſt the Riches of God's Mercy. Unleſs we admit that there are Contradictions in Scripture; we muſt acknowledge, that the Doctrine of Sanctification, does perfectly agree with the Doctrine of Grace.

And

Cauſe III.

And in Truth, to ſay, That God gave up his Son to Death, in order to Save Men, and that he will grant Remiſſion of Sins, and Eternal Happineſs, to every believing and repenting Sinner; is as much as can be ſaid to magnify the Divine Mercy: Except we ſhould pretend, that God would be more merciful, if he did indifferently Save all Mankind, and Reward Vice and Vertue alike; but this would be a horrid Thought, and no leſs than downright Blaſphemy. Then Sinners might ſay indeed, *Let us continue in Sin, that Grace may abound.*

Let us ſuppoſe that a Prince pardons a Rebellious Subject, and that he is ready to confer the greateſt Honours and Benefits upon him, on condition that this Subject, ſhall accept of the Pardon that is offered him, and ſhall relapſe no more into the ſame Crime; Would any Man be ſo unreaſonable as to ſay, that the Clemency of that Prince would be much greater, if he did grant his Favours to this Rebel, tho' he ſhould perſiſt in his Crime? And yet this is the ſame thing which ſome Men would have God do. It is very ſtrange, that any one ſhould think to Honour God, by ſuch Conceits, as do not only injure his Mercy, but his other Perfections too. Becauſe God is Merciful, muſt we forget that he is Holy, Juſt and Good? It is ſaid, *That we muſt aſcribe all to the Mercy of God*; what then, muſt we have no regard to his Holi-

Part I. neſs, his Juſtice and his Truth? Muſt what the Scripture tells of theſe laſt Perfections, be faintly and tenderly Expounded, whilſt we preſs and ſcrue up to the higheſt pitch, what it ſays of Mercy?

As to what is added, *That we ought to aſcribe nothing to our own Righteouſneſs*; it is unqueſtionably true. But do we aſcribe any thing to Man, when we ſay, that he is bound to do his Duty, and to accept the favour which God is pleaſed to beſtow upon him? Can any Man ſay, that the Rebel I mentioned juſt now, is the Author of his own Happineſs, and that he deſerves the Pardon granted him by his Prince; becauſe he accepts of it, and fulfils the Condition upon which it is offered? What reaſon then has a Man to value himſelf upon his own Righteouſneſs, or to arrogate any Merit to himſelf, ſince he is indebted to the Grace of God; both for the beginnings and the progreſs of his Sanctification? In ſhort, we ſhould take heed, that for fear of aſcribing any thing to Man, we may not rob the Divine Grace of what belongs to it, by not acknowledging its Gifts and Power in a Regenerate Man.

2. Here is another Maxim, which is alledged in Confirmation of the preceding and which aims at the ſame mark; It is this, *That we muſt not ſpeak ſo much of Good-works, leſt we inſpire Men with Pride and Preſumption.* And to ſupport this Maxim it is uſual, to run

run out upon Mens inclination to Pride; and upon the heinouſneſs of that Sin. But this Maxim proceeds only from the falſe and confuſed Notions which Men have about Religious Matters. Cauſe III.

Either this Maxim has no Senſe at all, or elſe it amounts to this; That whoſoever applies himſelf to Holineſs and Good-works, is in danger of falling into Pride; and that a neglect of Vertue contains a Man within the bounds of Humility. Which is as much as to ſay, that a Man may be holy without Humility, and humble without Holineſs. Two things which are the moſt ridiculous and contradictory, that can be aſſerted. At this rate it would be a dangerous thing to be a good Man, and more ſafe to be otherwiſe. By purſuing Vertue and Holineſs a Man draws near to Sin, and to the greateſt of Sins, I mean Pride; and by neglecting Holineſs, he attains Humility, which is one of the chief Chriſtian Vertues. If this is true, all that we call Vice or Vertue, is but an empty ſound. It is much that Men ſhould not ſee, that there can be no Holineſs without Humility, nor Humility without Holineſs; that where there is Holineſs, there is Humility, and Pride is excluded; and that where Pride is, there is no true Sanctification. The holier a Man grows, he becomes the more humble; and he is ſo far from coming the nearer to Pride by proceeding in Holineſs, that on the

Part I. contrary he removes the farther from it. The Inſtance of our Bleſſed Saviour, who was both perfectly Holy, and perfectly Humble: is a proof, that Humility is not incompatible with Holineſs.

But the Nature of Humility is not well underſtood. There are many who conceive no other Humility, but that which ariſes from the Diſorders of a vicious and irregular Life. So that when they would humble good Men, they rank them among the vileſt Sinners; they make them ſay, that there is nothing but Wickedneſs and Abomination in them; and that they have deſerved Eternal Damnation by innumerable Sins which they have committed, every moment of their Lives, and even by the beſt Actions they have done. The ſtrongeſt Expreſſions and the moſt exceſſive Hyperboles, are ſcarce ſufficient to exaggerate the number and greatneſs of their Sins. But there is enough of other Inducements and Motives to Humility, without thus confounding Vice with Vertue. It would be a pretty ſort of Humility, for a Man to live in Sin, to be at defiance with God, to do nothing for his ſake, and then with all this to confeſs himſelf a miſerable Sinner.

Pride and Preſumption ſhould not be encouraged; but yet under the pretence of humbling Men, we ought not to turn them into Blocks, or to confound a good Man, with a profligate Sinner. When we inveigh againſt the

the Pride of Man, we ought not to ſink his Courage; for that would immediately make him incapable of any thing that is good. Under colour of Honouring God, we muſt not diſhonour his Workmanſhip, ſpeak ſlightingly of his Gifts, and overlook his Image, in thoſe who bear it in a double Capacity; as they are Men, and as they are Chriſtians. It is a piece of Pride to arrogate any thing to our ſelves which we have not, or which does not come from us; but it is a falſe Humility, it is Hypocriſy, not to acknowledge the Graces of God in us. Cauſe III.

It is objected; *That ſome preſume much upon themſelves, that Man is very apt to flatter himſelf*, and to this purpoſe, the *Phariſees* are mentioned, *who truſted in their own Righteouſneſs.* To this I reply, That thoſe Preſumptious Perſons are Hypocrites, who have no ſolid Piety. I ſay, that the Grace of God, beats down that Pride, and that the *Phariſees* had nothing but an external Righteouſneſs, a deceitful and Hypocritical Sanctity. It is therefore without Reaſon, that Men cry down Holineſs, and pretend that the ſtudy of Good-works begets Preſumption, becauſe there have been, and there ſtill are Hypocrites. If we may ſay where Pride is to be found; it is in thoſe wild and extrevagant Moraliſts, who make all theſe Objections. Thoſe Men aſcribe very little to Good-works, and yet what Opinion do they not entertain of

Part I. themſelves? They fancy themſelves God's Favourites, and the truly Humble Men; and all this by virtue of their ſtock of Confidence: And which is yet worſe, they judge raſhly of thoſe, who endeavour to live better than themſelves, and they make bold to call them *Phariſees* and Hypocrites. Is not this a moſt intolerable Preſumption and Boldneſs?

3. The Abettors of Corruption inſiſt mightily upon this Maxim, *That exceſs in all things is to be condemned; and that Piety, when carried too far, degenerates into Superſtition and Hypocriſy.* It is not only the Libertines ſpeak after this manner; many who would be thought Wiſe and Rational Men, uſe the ſame Language. They pretend to Vertue, they condemn Atheiſm and Impiety; but they likewiſe condemn thoſe who would tie Men to the ſtrict practice of the Duties of Holineſs. *In all things*, ſay they, *a juſt Medium is to be obſerved.* The worſt of it is, that ſome Moraliſts give an occaſion to theſe Opinions, by the Pictures they make of Hypocritical and Superſtitious Men. They repreſent them as Men, who carry all the appearances of Devout Perſons; they tell us, that Hypocriſy goes beyond true Devotion; and they are not aware that by this, they turn Religion into ridicule, and render it odious.

This Maxim as well as the former, is founded upon the un-accurate Notions, which

which moſt People have concerning Morals; for it will appear to every Man who examines this Matter with ſome care. 1. That Piety can never be carried too far, and that we can never do too much in obedience to God, and in compliance with our Duty. And 2. That Piety, and Superſtition or Hypocriſy, are things oppoſite to one another: So that to imagine, that a diligent and earneſt application to Piety, leads Men to Superſtition, or Hypocriſy, is a monſtrous Abſurdity, and the higheſt Contradiction that can be maintained. It is juſt as if one ſhould ſay, that Gold or Silver by being very much refined might at laſt degenerate into Lead, or Earth. How or which way can Piety turn to Superſtition, or Hypocriſy? This is a thing that cannot be conceived. As long as Men Reaſon upon true Principles, they may purſue them with aſſurance, and without fear of running themſelves into falſe or dangerous Conſequences. Men will never fall into Superſtition or Hypocriſy, by the practice of Vertue. So far from it, that the more true Piety a Man has, he will find himſelf at the greater diſtance from Superſtition and Hypocriſy: And a Superſtitious Perſon is ſo far from out-ſtripping a good Man, that on the contrary he comes infinitely behind him. Solid Vertue is always attended with theſe two Characters: Firſt it is ſincere and from the Heart, and by that it deſtroys Hypocriſy,

Cauſe III.

Part I. pocrisy, instead of producing it: And then Secondly, it is well-informed and Rational, it fills the Mind and Heart with true Notions, with great and elevated Views; and so it sets Men at an infinite distance from those mean, ignorant, and trifling Things which the Superstitious are taken up withal. Let us conclude then, that Hypocritical and Superstitious Men, are so far from having too much Piety, that they have none at all: If it happens sometimes, as it certainly does; that Men who have a sound and honest Heart, are somewhat given to an odd kind of Devotion, which in some respects savours of Superstition; this does not proceed from Piety it self, but from a defect in those that profess it, who may either want Knowledge, or force of Mind.

IV. Tho' Men endeavour to defend Corruption, with those Maxims I have related; yet as these Maxims may easily be confuted, so they are sometimes forced to acknowledge, That the depravation of the Age is great, and that the Life of Christians is not agreeable to the Rules of their Religion. But for all this, they do not give up the Cause. They betake themselves to various Excuses, by which they think to exempt themselves from their Duty, or at least to lessen and extenuate the Sin of not observing it. These Excuses must needs maintain them in Security; they are beside very common, and even pass frequently for

good

good and juſt. Therefore I think it may be proper to Refute them too, in this Chapter. It would be a difficult Task, to reckon up all the Excuſes which are alledged in the behalf of Corruption, and to trace out all the doublings and artifices of Man's Heart, upon this Matter. It will be ſufficient to mention thoſe which are moſt general and ordinary. Cauſe III.

1. It is cuſtomary to excuſe Corruption, by ſaying, *That we are Men, and not Angels.* This Excuſe might be deſtroyed by what has been already ſaid, but yet it may be uſefull to dwell a little upon it. It is ſaid then, *That we are Men, and not Angels*; and that is a moſt certain Truth; but there is no ground to juſtify or excuſe by that the ill Lives of Chriſtians. For firſt, that very thing that we are Men, obliges us to the Practice of Vertue, inſtead of exempting us from it. *We are Men*, and as ſuch, we have a Reaſon which diſtinguiſhes us from Brutes, and a Conſcience which diſcerns between Good and Evil; we ought then to live according to Reaſon, and the Pinciples of Conſcience; and to do that which becomes the Nature of Man. *We are Men*, and by conſequence Mortal, we know we are not to live always in this World; and knowing this, we muſt either think of another Life, or propoſe to our ſelves no other End, than that of Beaſts; which follow their Inſtinct while they live, and then die never to live again. *We are Men,*

Part I. *Men*, but we are not Independent, we have a Creator and a Master; and as we are endued besides with Understanding, we are to give an account of our Actions before his Tribunal; it is therefore agreeable to the Nature of Man, to live like a Creature that depends upon God, and that must be Judged. So that this Consideration, *that we are Men*, is so far from excusing, that it condemns Corruption.

But it may be said *that we are weak Men*. This is very true, our Nature is frail, and has besides a strong byass to evil. But God speaks to us as to weak Men; he commands us nothing but what is proportioned, to that state of Imperfection we are in. Besides, this Excuse does not at all become Christians. To say, *we are weak Men*, is to shew we have but little sense of God's kindness towards us. We are not only Men, but we are Christians too, and this quality raises us above the natural condition of Men; it makes us New Men and New Creatures. Why do we then forget the Glory to which God has exalted our Nature through Jesus Christ? Why would we still lie under the burden of frail and corrupt Nature?

It is further said, *that we are not Angels*. But neither is it necessary that we should be so, to do that which God Commands us. When God gives us his Laws, he knows he gives them to Men; and therefore they are admirably suited to our present Condition in this

this World. If we were Angels, God would give us quite other Laws, the Gospel would be abolished, and the World should continue no longer in the state it is in. It is therefore an absurd imagination, to think that one cannot perform the Duties of Religion without being of an Angelical Nature. Cause III.

Let us then no longer pretend, *That because we are Men we are too weak to observe the Duties which Religion prescribes*; this excuse charges God with injustice, as if he did require from us such things, as are not agreeable with our Nature and Condition; it is injurious to the Gospel and to the Christian Religion, as well as to the Grace of Christ, and the Power of his Spirit; it is false, since the Scripture declares, that Grace regenerates and strengthens us, and that it makes us able to overcome the vitious inclinations of our Nature, and to free our selves from the Dominion of Sin: And Lastly, it is contrary to Experience; for those many Saints and good Men, who Practised the most * sublime and difficult Duties of Piety, were Men as we are, and as the † Sacred Writers observe, they were subject to the same infirmities with us, and many of them perhaps, had not those advantages which we have.

2. It is often alledged as an excuse, *That no Man is perfect, and that every one has his Faults.*

* James V. 17. † Heb. XII. 1.

This

Part I. This is ſaid every Day, and ſome pretend with that ſaying, to excuſe every thing. Excuſes for the moſt part, have ſomething of truth in them. This Propoſition, *That no Man is perfect*, is very true in one ſenſe, and altogether falſe in another.

No Man certainly is Perfect, in the ſtrict ſenſe of that Word, or as it imports a full and accompliſhed Perfection, free from all defect; ſuch a Perfection is to be had no where else but in Heaven. But there is a Perfection commenced, or begun, of which a Man Regenerated and Sanctified by Jeſus Chriſt, is capable. If it was not ſo: why ſhould Chriſt and his Apoſtles exhorts us, * *to be perfect*? Why ſhould they tell us, † *that he who is born of God does not ſin?* And that a Chriſtian is ‖ *thoroughly furniſhed to every Good Work?* If you ask, Who thoſe Perfect Men are? I anſwer, That they are thoſe who aſpire to Perfection, in whom ſin does not reign, who do not allow themſelves in any vitious Habit, who ſincerely and honeſtly apply themſelves to Holineſs, and have accuſtomed themſelves to practiſe the Duties of it with delight. Whoever is arrived at ſuch a State, has attained that Perfection which is attainable in this Life, and to which Chriſtians are called by the Goſpel; tho' there remain ſtill in him

* Matth. V. 48. Phil. I. 10. 1 Theſſ. V. 23. † 1 John V. ‖ 1 Cor. I. 8. 2 Tim. XI. 21.

ſome

ome infirmities inſeparable from humane Nature, and never totally, to be rooted out, before he gets to Heaven. We cannot be Perfect in that firſt and ſtrict Senſe I have mentioned; but we may be Perfect, and God will have us be ſo, in the ſecond and Evangelical ſenſe of that Word. Cauſe III.

It is therefore a frivolous Excuſe in the Mouth of Corrupt Men, to ſay, *That no Man is Perfect, and that we cannot attain to the Perfection, or to the State of the Bleſſed in Heaven*; for this is to ſhift the Queſtion, becauſe that is not the Perfection which God requires. We ought not to fix a falſe and abſurd Senſe upon God's Commandments, that we may have a pretence not to obey them. The Queſtion is, Whether Chriſtians are not bound to do that which God would have them do, and which they are able to do in this World; this is the Perfection to which he calls us.

We may apply very near the ſame Anſwer to that other Excuſe, *That every body has his Faults*: There are Faults which do not deſtroy Piety; and God is graciouſly pleaſed not to impute ſuch Faults to thoſe that Fear him; and in this Senſe, no Man is free from Faults; but there is another ſort of Faults, which ſhould not be called bare Faults or Defects; thoſe are the Vices and Paſſions which cannot conſiſt with Piety, the great, the reigning, the habitual or deliberate Sins. True Chriſtians are free from ſuch Faults, and

thoſe

Part I. thoſe who are not free from them, are no true Chriſtians. If this Maxim, *That every one has his Faults*, is not thus explained; we muſt ſpeak no longer of Vertue and Vice; for this Excuſe will ſerve for all Sins, and acquit every Body. If a Man is given to Swearing, if he is Revengful, Paſſionate, or Falſe, if he commit Adultery, it is but ſaying, *Every one has his Faults and no Man is Perfect.* Such Language from a Man full of vicious Habits is unſufferable. What diſmal Conſequences, would not Libertines draw from ſuch a Principle? We muſt therefore underſtand this Propoſition in the ſenſe, and with thoſe reſtrictions I have obſerved, and then it may be uſeful to comfort Good Men, but it will never excuſe thoſe who are Vicious.

3. Men endeavour to excuſe themſelves by laying the Sins they commit, upon the great Number and the force of Temptations. *It is very hard*, ſay they, *to avoid Sin, we are ſo many ways drawn into it, Temptations are ſo ſtrong and ſo frequent, that we muſt go out of the World, if we would preſerve our Innocence.* Sometimes they impute to the Devil the Sins which they fall into, and at other times ſo great is their Audaciouſneſs, that they throw them upon God and his Providence.

All theſe Excuſes are trifling, and ſome of them are impious. For, to begin with that which is borrowed from the Multitude and Strength

trength of Temptations; it is unreaſonable to imagine, that the number of Temptations is ſo great, that their force is irreſiſtible. Temptations are frequent, I confeſs; but it is n Error to think, that there is nothing but nares and Solicitations to Sin in the World. This would give us a ſtrange Notion of God nd of his Works, and in that Caſe Man's Condition would be very Miſerable. It is ertain on the other hand, that the Opportuities and Solicitations to Good, are very ommon, eſpecially in relation to Chriſtians, whom an infinite Number of Objects and Moives call back to God, and to their Duty. Even Temptations themſelves give them occaions of doing Good. God ſupplies them *bundantly with all things neceſſary to Life and Godlineſs*; as we are told, 2 *Pet.* I. Certainly we are to preſume, that if God permits hat Men ſhould here meet with Temptations nd Opportunities of undoing themſelves, he offers them on the other hand, many Occaſions and Inducements to take care of their alvation. So that the great number of Soicitations to Good, does already deſtroy the Excuſe which is taken from the great number of Temptations. Cauſe III.

Neither is it more reaſonable to complain of the Strength of thoſe Temptations. Such a Complaint is very unſeemly from Chriſtians, who are appointed to overcome the World, the Fleſh, and all other Temptations.

Part I. When all things, are well conſidered, it will appear, that it is within our ſelves, in our own Negligence, and in the perverſneſs of our Wills, that we ought to look for that which makes Temptations ſo ſtrong and too hard for us. They have no more ſtrength than we give them. St. *James* has decided this Queſtion in ſuch a manner as ſhould ſtop the Mouth of thoſe who ſeek the cauſe of Evil any where elſe but in their own Hearts. * *Every Man*, ſays he, *is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and inticed.*

The Devil has no more power over us, than Temptations have: For he can but tempt us. But yet we are apt to aſcribe to him a kind of Omnipotence. According to the Vulgar Opinion, one would think, that the Devil is the Author of all the Sins that are committed; that he is every where; and that Men are but his Inſtruments, which he uſes at pleaſure. If this was true, Men were indeed to be pitied, and it would be ſome Excuſe to thoſe who live ill. The Scripture teaches us no ſuch thing.

But the higheſt pitch of Temerity, is to charge God and Providence with our Sins. Thus ſome Men are wont to ſay, *Such a thing comes to paſs becauſe God would have it ſo; and ſuch another thing did not happen becauſe it did not pleaſe God that it ſhould.* When this

* 1 James I. 14.

Excuſe

Excuse is made with relation to Sin, it amounts to the most horrid of Blasphemies; it lays upon God all the Evil that happens, and makes him the Author of it: For either this Excuse signifies nothing; or else it imports, that God is the Cause of what happens, and not we. This must needs be the meaning of it, because Men pretend to excuse themselves with saying, *God would have it so.* In a word, here is no middle way; either the Cause of Sin is in Man, or it is not. If it is in Man, he can accuse no body else but himself; he cannot clear himself by saying, God would or would not have it so. If the Cause of Sin be not in Man, he is discharged, and all the Evil lights upon God. It is an astonishing thing, that Men who believe God to be infinitely Holy and Just, can entertain such thoughts. Cause III.

4. Another Excuse is often alledged, and it is fetched from common *Practice, Custom and Example.* That which is generally done is thought to be Innocent, or at least Pardonable. But the Greatness and the Universality of Corruption excuse no body: Custom and Example cannot make any thing lawful which is bad. Where there is an express Law, it is to no purpose to plead Practice to the contrary. Custom or Numbers exempt no Man from doing that which God Commands, and will never protect him at the Day of Judgment. Custom and Example are so far from

Part I. excuſing Vice, that on the contrary, this very thing that the Cuſtom is bad, ought to make Men ſenſible how neceſſary it is, to ſet about a good Reformation.

5. But if Men think that Example and Cuſtom excuſe them, they fancy themſelves yet much more excuſable, when they can alledge the Examples and the Sins of Good Men. The Libertines triumph here. *To what purpoſe is it*, ſay they, *to recommend Holineſs ſo ſtrictly, and to enforce it with ſuch ſevere penalties, when we ſee many good Men follow a courſe quite oppoſite to thoſe Maxims, and to that exact Morality?* But they ought to conſider that it is extream hard, or rather impoſſible, to know certainly, whether a Man is truly a good Man or not. We cannot be aſſured of this, unleſs we knew Mens Hearts, which belongs only to God. This Reflection does already defeat the Excuſe, which is borrowed from the Sins of good Men. We frequently imagine the Perſon who ſins to be a good Man, when he is but an Hypocrite, or an Atheiſt. Indeed Piety and Charity require, that we ſhould think the beſt of our Neighbours, eſpecially of thoſe in whom the Marks of ſolid Piety and Vertue appear; but neither Charity nor Piety obliges us to confound Vice with Godlineſs, or to call Evil Good. Sin is Sin, and ought to be condemned wherever we meet with it, and more particularly in thoſe, who

who pass for better Men than others. When Men who seem to be Pious fall into such Sins as are inconsistent with Regeneration; we ought to think, that those Men either give the Lye to their Character, and are not what we took them for; and then we may apply to them the Words of *Ezekiel*, Chap xxxiii. v. 18. *When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby*; or else we must think, that tho' they have some Piety, it is but weak as yet, so that they are not what they appear to be; But however, we ought to be positive in this, That the Examples and the Sins of others, will excuse no Man in the sight of God. Cause III.

6. Another very common Evasion, by which Men endeavour to excuse the neglect and omission of their Duty, is *that they do not profess Devotion and Piety.* This is the ordinary Plea of Men of Business, of Worldlings, of Young People, of Courtiers, of Military Men, and of a great many besides in all Conditions. *We do not pretend to Devotion*, they cry, *we are ingaged in the World.* And with this shift, they not only think themselves excusable for neglecting Piety; but they fancy they have a Right to neglect it, and that they do a great deal, if they observe some of the External Duties of it. One can hardly believe, that these Persons are in earnest, when they make such an Excuse, It astonishes a Man to find Christians, who have the Confi-

Part I. dence to ſay, That Piety is not their Buſineſs, that they are of another Profeſſion, and that they are not at leiſure to be Devout.

I fancy, there are two Things which deceive thoſe who alledge this Excuſe. 1. That they do not well underſtand what Devotion is; they look upon it as a very auſtere and ſingular way of living; from whence they conclude, that but few People are able to apply themſelves to it, and ſo they turn it over to the Clergy, to Women, or to thoſe who have much leiſure. I have obſerved already the falſeneſs of this Prejudice, and ſhewed that Piety is neither ſingular nor auſtere. 2. The other Cauſe of their Error ſeems to be this; that they do not conſider, that Piety is every bodies Buſineſs, and that ſuch is the nature of it, that it may be practiſed by all Men. Not but that ſecular Occupations and Callings, do frequently obſtruct Piety and ingage Men in Vice; and therefore a Chriſtian ſhould never be ſo taken up with the Affairs of this Life, as thereby to diſable himſelf from performing the Duties of Chriſtianity. But after all, a Man may live like a good Chriſtian in any lawful Calling; and in that ſenſe properly we are to underſtand the Words of St. *Paul*, * *That the Grace of God which brings Salvation, has appeared unto all Men, teaching them to live*

* Tit. II. 11.

ſoberly,

soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World.

Cause III.

Do those who plead it for an Excuse, *that they do not profess Devotion*, imagine, that there are two ways to go to Heaven, the one for Devout, and the other for Worldly Men; the one narrow, and the other broad? Do they think that the Commandments of God do not concern all Men, that there is respect of Persons with God, or that he dispenses with his own Laws? How can they prove these Distinctions? Are not we all Christians? Have we not all been Baptized? Does not God give us all the same Laws? Or have some more reason to love God than others? And ought not the great Concern of our Salvation, to be equally dear to us all?

I grant, that those who have greater Opportunities, and more Leisure than others; ought to make use of these Advantages: But I maintain at the same time; That none stand in greater need of Piety, than those who say, *We are ingaged in the World, we do not pretend to Devotion.* It is because they are not Devout, that their Condition is very sad; and the more they are ingaged in the World, the greater are the Temptations and Distractions, to which they are liable: Now he that is exposed to a Storm, had need take more care, than he who enjoys a Calm.

These are the principal Maxims and Sentiments, which are made use of to Authorize

Part I. Corruption. Whoever takes notice of what is ſaid and done in the World, muſt needs acknowledge that theſe and the like Maxims are vented abroad every Day; ſo that in order to obſtruct the progreſs of Corruption, it is abſolutely neceſſary to undeceive Men, in reference to theſe Sentiments, and to oppoſe that criminal Boldneſs, which ſhamefully Corrupts the Truths of Religion, and turns Impieties into Religious Maxims, and Articles of Faith.

CAUSE IV.

The Abuſe of Holy Scripture.

IT is a daring piece of Confidence to Authorize Corruption with Maxims borrowed from Religion; but it is the laſt degree of Audaciouſneſs and Impiety, to turn the Holy Scripture to ſuch a ſcandalous uſe, and to ſeek in that Divine Book Pretences and Apologies for Vice; and yet the Extravagance and Temerity of many bad Chriſtians come up to this pitch, Several declarations of the Word of God, are made by them as many Maxims, under which they think to ſhelter themſelves; and if we believe them, their is nothing either in their Practice or Opinions, but what is agreeable to the Will and Intentions

ions of God himſelf. This Abuſe of the Scripture, I deſign to ſhew in this Chapter, to be one of the Cauſes of Corruption; and it cannot be too ſeriouſly conſidered. Cauſe IV.

The Paſſages of Scripture which are abuſed to this purpoſe, may be reduced to theſe four Heads. The *Firſt* comprehends the places which are brought againſt the neceſſity of Good-works. Under the *Second*, we will examine thoſe Declarations of Scripture, by which ſome endeavour to prove, That all Men without exception, are in a State of Corruption which ſubjects them to Sin. In the *Third* place, we ſhall anſwer the Arguments drawn from the Examples of thoſe Saints, whoſe Sins are Recorded in Scripture. And *Laſtly*, we ſhall make ſome Reflections upon thoſe Scriptures, in which the Divine Mercy is promiſed to the greateſt Sinners.

There are divers Paſſages in Scripture, which being ill underſtood, lead many into this Perſuaſion, That Good-works are not of abſolute Neceſſity. And Firſt, nothing is more confidently alledged to this purpoſe, than what we read in many places; * *That we are juſtified by Faith, and not by our Works.* No Doctrine is more clearly and expreſly delivered in the Goſpel, than that of Juſtification by Faith. But it is a perverting of this Doctrine to conclude from it, that Salvation

* Rom. III. &c.

may

Part I. may be obtained without Good-works. This Concluſion muſt needs be falſe, ſince the Goſpel enjoyns Good-works as a neceſſary Condition in order to Salvation. St. *Paul* tells us that * *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God*. And does not that import, that none ſhall be Saved without Holineſs and Good-works? The ſame Apoſtle teaches us, that at the Day of Judgment, when Men ſhall be admitted into, or excluded from Heaven; God will have a regard to their Works, to the good or evil which they ſhall have done. † *God will render to every Man according to his Works*. || *We muſt all appear before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that we may receive according to what we have done, whether good or bad.* This is very poſitive, and therefore ſince there can be no Contradiction in Scripture, here is enough already to Convince us, that the Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith, has nothing in it which deſtroys the Neceſſity of Good-works.

But it will appear yet leſs difficult to reconcile theſe two Doctrines; if we ſuppoſe that which no Man can reaſonably Conteſt, namely, That when the Scripture ſays, that *Faith* is ſufficient to Salvation, we are to underſtand by the word *Faith* in this Propoſition; *that true Faith* which the Goſpel requires. Now if we ask, What that Faith is, and by

* Heb. XII. 14. † Rom. II. 6. || 2 Cor. V. 10.

what

what Marks may it be known? All the Apoſtles will unanimouſly tell us, That true Faith produces a Holy Life, and that it diſcovers it ſelf by all manner of Good-works. They aſſign Good-works as the eſſential Mark and Character, that diſtinguiſhes a Saving from an Hypocritical Faith. By that very thing therefore that the Goſpel requires Faith, it does likewiſe require Good-works, ſince Faith cannot be without Works. And by conſequence the Opinion of thoſe, who fancy that Faith is ſufficient without Works, is evidently abſurd, and contrary to the Goſpel, and to the nature of Faith it ſelf. Cauſe IV.

But to ſet this matter ſtill in a clearer Light; it is neceſſary to take notice here of two Miſtakes, which Men are apt to run into when they ſpeak of Faith and Good-works. The firſt is, that they ſeparate Faith from Works; they look upon Faith as a thing quite different from Works, and which ſupplies the want of them; or rather they oppoſe Faith to Works, as if theſe two Things were contrary to each other. A Corrupt Man will ſay, *I confeſs that I have not Good-works, but however I have Faith.*

Thoſe who ſpeak thus, ſuppoſe that they may have Faith tho' they have not Works; but St. *James* has directly confuted this Imagination; * *What does it profit, my Brethren,*

* James II. 14, 17.

though

Part I. *though a Man say he has Faith and have not Works? can Faith save him? If Faith have not Works, it is dead, being alone.*

Who can after this separate Saving Faith from Good-works? Can we separate that from Faith, which God has declared to be inseparable from it? It shews that Men are strangely blinded with Ignorance and Prejudice, when at this time of day we are fain to prove things so plain and unquestionable.

The Second Illusion is, that Men place Faith in Confidence alone, and many define it by that. They fancy that to have Faith, is nothing else but to believe that God is merciful, and to rely upon the Merits of Christ; because Faith embraces the Promises of the Gospel, the natural effect of which Promise is to fill the Heart with assurance and tranquility. It is beyond all doubt, that for the most part true Faith is attended with Confidence. But Confidence is not the whole of Faith; and I cannot imagine, what part of God's Word countenances that Notion, which places the Essence of Faith in Confidence alone. The Faith which the Gospel speaks of, consists in believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; in embracing his Doctrine as True, and in making Profession of it, in doing his Commandments, and hoping for Salvation from him. But the resolving all Faith and Religion into Acts of Confidence, is the most extravagant

vagant Conceit that can enter into a Man's ead. If this Notion was true, it would ollow from it, that in order to be Saved, it enough for a Man to believe that he ſhall e Saved. Which is the ſame thing as to ſay, That whoever would have a right to confide in God, needs do no more in order to that, than actually to truſt in him; and that is a moſt ridiculous Thought, which turns all Religion into a ſtrong Fancy. Before we believe a thing we ought to know why we ſhould believe it, and have good Reaſon and ſolid Grounds for our Belief. Before we truſt in God, we ought to ſatisfy our ſelves that we have a Right to confide in him: For can a Man be Saved only becauſe without any Ground or Reaſon he fancies that he ſhall? We ought not to rely upon God but according to his Promiſe. Now God has promiſed nothing to thoſe who live and are hardened in Sin; far from promiſing any thing to them, he threatens them with inevitable Ruin. What claim or title then can an obdurate ſinner have to the Mercy of God? What Confidence can he repoſe in God's Promiſes, s long as he continues impenitent? None at ll, except we ſuppoſe in God a general Deree, to Save indifferently all ſorts of Perons. Cauſe IV.

It muſt not be ſaid, that theſe Conſiderations are apt to Alarm and Diſturb the Peace f Mens Conſciences; for they will Alarm none

Part I. none of those who are animated with true Faith and sincere Piety. And as to others; we do them a great piece of service; when we awaken and terrify them out of that false Quiet, into which a groundless Confidence has betrayed them. On the other hand, it is a dangerous thing to teach, That Confidence is the most essential thing to Faith; for by this we may alarm some good Men, who either through Melancholy or want of Instruction, are destitute of Confidence and inward Peace. And it has certainly happened, that several Pious Persons are fallen into black Thoughts and sad Scruples concerning their Salvation, and that they have in some measure despond-ed, because they did not find Confidence, and a sense of the Love of God in them-selves.

From all these Reflections it does evidently appear, that Faith never ought, nor can be separated from Good-works; and that Chri-stians are as much obliged to apply themselves to Good-works, as they are to believe, and to have Faith.

But now if it be asked, Why St. *Paul* then oppose Faith to Works, and why he ex-cludes Works, when he treats of Justificati-on? I Answer, That the Apostle aims at two Things by this. His Design is to shew, 1. That Works are not the Cause and Foun-dation of Mens Salvation; but that it flows from the pure Mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

Christ. This he proves with respect both to the Heathens and the *Jews*, in the first Chapters of his Epistle to the *Romans*. But he did not mean to say, that Good-works are not necessary under the Covenant of Grace. His Expressions are too clear to leave the least room for any doubt about this matter: To reject the meritoriousness of Good-works is one thing, and to deny their necessity is another. But 2*dly*. because it may be objected, that St. *Paul* does intirely exclude Works, and that he uses Expressions which imply, that Christians are no longer obliged to the practise of them, and that they have no influence on Mens Salvation either as Causes or Conditions; but on the contrary, are opposed to Faith: Therefore I add, that he speaks thus with relation to the Works of the Ceremonial Law, and especially to Circumcision. There were many in St. *Paul*'s time, who asserted, that Christians were bound to observe those Legal Ordinances. It was about this Question that the Apostles met at *Jerusalem*, and determined, * *That Christians are justified by Faith only, and that the yoke of Mosaical Ordinances, ought not to be laid upon them.* The same Controversy is handled by St. *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, where giving an account of his Dispute with St. *Peter*, and of his reproving him for his

Cause IV.

* Acts XV.

too

Part I. too great compliance with the *Jews*; he affirms, *That we are juſtified by the Faith of Chriſt, and not by the Works of the Law.*

Why has not that difference been obſerved which St. *Paul* makes about Works? When he ſpeaks of the Works of the Moſaical Law, he calls them *the Works of the Law*, or barely *Works*; but when he treats of the Works which the Goſpel preſcribes, he calls them *Good-works*; becauſe they are really good, holy and profitable in their own Nature; but this Title of *Good-works*, is never beſtowed upon the Works of the Ceremonial Law, which conſidered in themſelves had nothing of Goodneſs or Holineſs in them. In a word, *Good-works* in St. *Paul*'s ſtyle, are quite another thing than barely *Works*, or the *Works of the Law*,

If this had been conſidered, ſuch great pains needed not to have been taken, to make * St. *Paul* agree with St. *James*. † St. *Paul* ſays, *That Man is juſtified by Faith without the Works of the Law*; || and St. *James*, *That Man is juſtified by Works, and not by Faith only.* There is no contradiction between theſe two Apoſtles. Both follow one Hypotheſis, and argue upon the ſame Principles. St. *Paul* diſputing againſt the *Jews*, who wou'd tye Chriſtians to the Obſervance of the VVorks of the Moſaical Law; affirms, That Faith in

* Rom. III. 28. † Gal. II. 16. || James II. 24.

Chriſt

Chriſt is ſufficient, provided it brings forth Good-works; and that it is not neceſſary to obſerve the Moſaical Rites. St. *James* Diſputing againſt Hereticks, who pretended that Faith did Save without Good-works, and ſo did intirely ruin our Saviour's Morals; declares, that Faith which does not produce Good-works, is not ſufficient to Salvation. Is not this the ſame Doctrine with St. *Paul*'s? But inſtead of reconciling theſe two Apoſtles, ſome People find here great difficulties. They do not reconcile St. *James* with St. *Paul*, but they rather refute St. *James* by St. *Paul*. St. *James* is expounded with great Caution; as if he had gone too far by ſaying, *That Man is juſtified by Works, and not by Faith only.* This Propoſition is ſoftned as much as poſſible, it is excuſed rather than explained; but as for what St. *Paul* ſays, *That Faith alone juſtifies without Works*, it is taken in the utmoſt ſtrictneſs; ſo that all is aſcribed to Faith, and nothing to Good-works. Nay, Faith is ſet in oppoſition to Good-works, and God to God himſelf; the Paſſages of Scripture which ſpeak of Faith being brought out againſt thoſe which relate to Works. *It is true*, ſay ſome, *the Scripture ſays, that without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God*; but it is likewiſe written, *That we are not juſtified by our Works, but only by Faith.* And by this way of Reaſoning, Men raiſe themſelves above the reproaches and accuſations of their own Con-

Cauſe IV.

Part I. ſciences. I ſay it once more; this is to attack and confute the Word of God by it ſelf, and to charge the Holy Ghoſt with ſelf-contradiction. For in ſhort, if a Man can be juſtified without Good-works, he can be ſaved without them too; ſince the being juſtified is the ſame thing with the being ſaved: Now if a Man can be ſaved without Good-works, he may ſee the Face of God without Holineſs; which is directly contrary to what St. *Paul* tells us, * *That without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

2. A great many People imagine, that it is one of the Priviledges of Chriſtians, not to be tyed to the Obſervation of God's Law as the *Jews* were; ſome miſtaken places give occaſion to that Error, and particularly this; † *We are no more under the Law but under Grace.* Theſe Words are thus interpreted. *The Law did preſcribe Works, but the Goſpel requires only Faith; the Law did threaten, but the Goſpel ſpeaks only of Grace and Pardon. So that to require Works, at this time of day, is to bring back the Diſpenſation of the Law.* There is ſomething of Truth in this Reaſoning; but thoſe who make uſe of it to free themſelves from the Obſervation of God's Commandments, do very little underſtand either what the Law or the Goſpel is, and wherein theſe

* Heb. XII. 14. † Rom. VI. 14.

Two

Two Diſpenſations differ. It is certain, that the Law was a Diſpenſation of Severity; it did not propoſe to Men remiſſion of Sins and Salvation as the Goſpel does. The Law had not that Power and Efficacy to Sanctify Men, which Grace has. The Law laid upon the *Jews*, a great many Obligations which were not only burdenſome and painful; but which beſides had no intrinſecal Holineſs in them; and thoſe Duties were enjoyned under a Curſe. The Law it ſelf was a time of Severity and Malediction, in reſpect to all the Nations of the Earth, ſince all the while that Oeconomy did ſubſiſt, they were excluded from the Covenant which God had made with the *Jews*. In theſe ſeveral regards, we are not under the Law, but under Grace. Cauſe IV.

But if from this, that we are not under the Law, we ſhould infer, that we are no longer bound to do what is juſt; this Inference would overturn the whole Goſpel, and transform Religion into Libertiniſm. If becauſe we are under Grace we ought to ſpeak no more of Works; why ſhould the Goſpel preſcribe Works, and the ſame Works which the Law enjoyned, excepting only the Ceremonies? Why ſhould this Goſpel call us to a Holineſs, which exceeds that of the *Jews*, and enforce this Obligation, with more terrible Threatnings, than thoſe of the Law? Why did our Saviour, *John* the Baptiſt and the Apoſtles, preach up Repentance, and enter upon their

Part I. Miniſtry with theſe Words, * *Repent ye?* According to the Hypotheſis of theſe Men, they ſhould have ſpoken to them after this manner, *This is the time of Grace, the Law is paſt, and the Covenant of Works is aboliſhed; therefore fear nothing, let not your ſins trouble you, for Salvation is promiſed to all Mankind.* Whence comes it to paſs that our || Saviour ſpeaks only of Works, in his Sermon upon the Mount; or that St. *Paul* declares, that the natural intention and the proper effect of Grace, is *to teach Men to live according to the Rules of Temperance, Juſtice, and Godlineſs?* Muſt we ſay, that God is altered, that he does not love Holineſs ſo much now, as he did heretofore; or that Sin is become leſs odious to him, ſince it was expiated by the Death of his Son? *But* (it is ſaid) *we are no more under the Law.* What, are Chriſtians then a Lawleſs People? On the contrary we are under the Law, I mean under the Law of Chriſt, under * *the Law of the Spirit of Life, which makes us free from the Law of Sin and Death.*

But let us hear St. *Paul* himſelf, in what ſenſe and reſpect does he ſay, *That we are no more under the Law but under Grace?* He ſays this, preciſely to ſhew, that we ought to live no longer in Sin. Theſe are his own Words, † *What then? Shall we Sin becauſe we are not*

* Matth. III. 2. & IV. 17. || Matth. V. 6. 7. * Rom. VIII. 2.
† Rom. VI. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

under

under the Law but under Grace? God forbid. On the contrary, *Sin ſhall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under Grace; you were formerly the ſervants of Sin, but now being made free from Sin, and become the ſervants of God, ye have your fruit unto Holineſs.* We need but read the ſequel of his Diſcourſe to ſee how he inveighs againſt thoſe, who turned the Grace of the Goſpel into a pretence to live in Sin. Cauſe IV.

Before I leave this matter, I ſhall take notice of two Errors, which are pretty common. The Firſt is, the applying to Chriſtians at this Day, all thoſe things which were ſpoken of old by the Apoſtles, to the Converted *Jews*. It is ſaid, *That we are no more under the Law*; and Chriſtians are often exhorted to bleſs God for being no longer under the Curſe of the Law, and the Yoke of *Moſes*. And upon this a great many Oppoſitions are obſerved betwixt the Law and the Goſpel. For my part, I do not think thoſe Exhortations and Oppoſitions, ſo very proper to be inſiſted on, when we are ſpeaking to Men who never were *Jews*; unleſs we do it with a deſign to ſhew the Excellency of the Goſpel-Covenant, above that of the Law, and the Advantages of Chriſtians above *Jews*. For after all, the Law was given only to the *Jews*, and the *Gentiles* were never ſubjected to the Ceremonies or the Curſe of it, as the *Jews* were. Why ſhould we then ſay to People who never were

Part I. under the Law, *You are no more under the Law?* The Apoſtles indeed ſpoke in that manner to the Converted *Jews*; but as to thoſe who were formerly *Pagans*, it would be more fitting to tell them; * *You have been converted from Idols to the living God, Remember that ye were in times paſt Gentiles without hope, and without God in the World; and therefore live no longer like Heathens.* It is a great Fault not to expound the Scripture according to the true Scope of it, and to apply all that it contains, to all ſorts of Perſons without diſtinction.

The other Error is of greater Conſequence. People fancy, that becauſe we are not under the Law, which was a Covenant of Rigor, we are now to ſpeak of nothing elſe to Men, but of Grace and Promiſes, and that it is contrary to the Spirit of the Goſpel, to threaten and to denounce Curſes againſt Sinners. It has been ſaid already, in what ſenſe the Law was a Covenant of Rigor, in oppoſition to the Covenant of Grace; but the Goſpel has alſo its Curſes, and they are much more terrible than thoſe of the Law. The Goſpel ſpeaks of the future Puniſhments of another Life, in much clearer and ſtronger Expreſſions, than the Law does. To be convinc'd of this, we need but reflect upon that oppoſition which St. *Paul* makes between the Law and

* Theſſ. I. 9. Epheſ. II. 12. & IV. 17.

the

the Goſpel, iu the Tenth Chapter to the *Hebrews*, *He that deſpiſed Moſes's Law died without mercy, under two or three Witneſſes; of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye ſhall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy thing, and has done deſpight unto the Spirit of Grace? We know him that has ſaid, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompenſe, ſaith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God.* Cauſe IV.

3. The Libertines do likewiſe abuſe what St. *Paul* ſays in the Epiſtle to the * *Galatians* concerning Chriſtian Liberty; when he declares that Chriſtians *are freed from the bondage of the Law*, when he exhorts them; *to ſtand faſt in that Liberty*, and proteſts, *that Chriſt profiteth nothing to thoſe, who would be juſtified by the Law.* But a Man may ſee with half an Eye, that the Apoſtle meant only, that Chriſtians are no longer bound to obſerve Circumciſion, and the other Ceremonies of the Law of *Moſes*. That St. *Paul* has no other view or deſign but this, will plainly appear to every one who will read the whole Epiſtle, and particularly the Second Chapter of it.

In the V Chapter we find two things which are deciſive in this Matter. 1. St. *Paul* ſpeaks

* Gal. V. 1.

Part I. there expreſly of Circumciſion. * *Behold, I Paul ſay unto you, that if you be Circcumiſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing; for I teſtifie again to every Man that is Circumciſed, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. Chriſt is become of none effect unto you, whoſoever of you are juſtified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace.* 2. It is very obſervable, with what circumſpection the Apoſtle delivers himſelf, leſt his Doctrine ſhould be wreſted to favour Licentiouſneſs; after he had ſaid, † *You are called liberty*, he adds, immediately *only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the Fleſh.* He explains what he means by living after the Fleſh, by making an enumeration, of thoſe Sins which the Fleſh produces, and which exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven. He exhorts Men to live after the Spirit, and to practiſe the Chriſtian Vertues. In the IV Chapter, he purſues the ſame Exhortations, and he ends the Epiſtle with theſe remarkable Words. which contain the ſumm of his Doctrine; || *For in Chriſt Jeſus neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion, but a new Creature*; that is to ſay, Whether a Man be a Jew or a Heathen, it matters not, ſo he believes in Jeſus Chriſt, and obſerves God's Commandments; * *Peace and Mercy be on them all who walk after this Rule.* Is there any thing plainer than this Doctrine; And

* Gal. V. 2, 3, 4. † ver. 13. || Chap. VI. 15. * ver. 16.

yet

Cauſe IV.

yet how clear ſoever it may be, Chriſtian Liberty is alledged to ſet Men free from the Obligation to keep God's Commandments. All that St. *Paul* ſays againſt Circumciſion and the Ceremonies of the Law, is by an Enormous Blaſphemy, turned againſt the Holy Commandments of the Son of God. Can any thing more Odious or Prophane be imagined, than the perverting of the Holy Scripture at this rate?

4. Thoſe who plead on the ſide of Corruption, are wont to object againſt what is ſaid in behalf of Holineſs, this Sentence of *Solomon's*, * *Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thy ſelf over-wiſe.* And what Inferences do they not draw from thence? They conclude from this place, That a Man ought not to pretend ſo much to Holineſs, or to ſet up for a good Man, and that in all things a Mediocrity is beſt. One may eaſily apprehend that ſuch Sentiments muſt needs introduce Licentiouſneſs; eſpecially, when they are thought to be ſupported by a Divine Authority.

But let us ſee whether or no, ſuch Conceits can be founded upon this Sentence of *Solomon's*. I ſhall ask in the firſt place, Whether it is poſſible for a Man to be too Juſt or too Wiſe, and whether there can be a vicious exceſs in Righteouſneſs or Wiſdom? If

* Eccleſ. VII. 16.

Part I. a Man may be over-righteous, he may like-wiſe love God too much; for to be righteous, and to love God is the ſame thing. Now God requires that we ſhould love him with all our Heart, and conſequently that we ſhould be as righteous, as it is poſſible for us to be. But far from being over-righteous we can never be righteous enough. And if we can never be righteous enough, is there any occaſion to exhort us, that we ſhould not be over-righteous? I wiſh Men had at leaſt that reverence for the Scripture, as not to make it ſpeak Abſurdities.

I know the ordinary Evaſion: Vicious Men will ſay, that when Piety runs to exceſs, it leads to Superſtition or Pride, and becomes troubleſome and ridiculous. Every body ſays that, but without Reaſon. I have refuted that Opinion, and ſhewed that true Piety never degenerates into Superſtition, or Pride, and that Devout Men who are Superſtitious or troubleſome, have but a falſe Devotion or a miſguided Zeal.

This may direct us to the true meaning of the Sentence in Queſtion; *Solomon* does not ſpeak here of true Juſtice and Wiſdom. For whether he may have an eye here upon Superſtitious or Hypocritical Perſons whoſe Righteouſneſs is but imaginary, which Senſe is adopted by many Interpreters, or whether he ſpeaks of thoſe who exerciſe Juſtice with too much ſeverity, as ſome think; or

whethe

whether as it is conceived by others, he gives his advice to buſy and preſumptious People, who meddle in things which do not concern them, and fancy themſelves able to determine all Matters; however, it is plain, that *Solomon* does not ſpeak here of good Men, who exactly follow the Rules of true Juſtice and Wiſdom. If we ſtick to the laſt of theſe Three Expoſitions, which ſeems to agree beſt with *Solomon*'s Deſign; then the meaning of this place is clear and rational, and has nothing in it contrary to Piety; whereas the ſenſe which is put upon theſe Words by the Libertines, is both Abſurd and Impious. Cauſe IV.

Thoſe who would either juſtify or excuſe Corruption; uſe to object in the ſecond place, That ſince the Scripture teaches that all Men, and even good Men are deeply ingaged in Corruption; it muſt follow from thence, that Holineſs and Good-works are not ſo very neceſſary, and that the practice of theſe is impoſſible. Now to prove this univerſal Corruption of all Men, they bring ſeveral Declarations of Scripture, and this among the reſt, *There is not one that doeth good, no not one*, &c. *Pſal.* 14. *Rom.* 3.

If their meaning in citing theſe Words, was only to ſhew, that there is no Man altogether free from Sin; and if it was granted on the other hand, that good Men do not ſin in the ſame manner that the wicked do; I would not quarrel much about this Interpretation,

Part I. tion, tho' not altogether exact, or agreeable to the ſcope of *David* in the 19*th Pſalm*, But there is another deſign in it, which is to infer from theſe Words, that Men differ very little from one another, that they are all guilty of many great Sins, and that none do, or can practiſe the Duties of Holineſs. In a word, this is intended for the Apology of Corruption, and to ſilence thoſe who oppoſe it.

If what *David* ſays in this place is to be ſtrictly underſtood, it will follow, that there is not one good Man upon Earth; that all Men are perverted, that they are all become abominable by their Sins, and that there is not one ſingle Perſon that is juſt, or that fears God. But this Conſequence raiſes Horror, it is contrary to Truth and Experience, and to what the Scripture declares in a Thouſand places, where it ſpeaks of good Men, and diſtinguiſhes them from the Wicked. Nay, this Conſequence may be deſtroyed from what we read in that very *Pſalm*, which mentions the Juſt who are protected by God, and the Wicked who perſecute them. This complaint of *David*, muſt therefore be underſtood with ſome Reſtrictions.

By reading the XIV *Pſalm*, we may perceive that *David* intends to deſcribe in it, the extream Corruption of Men in his time. There he draws the Picture of Impiety and Atheiſm, and ſpeaks of *thoſe Fools, who ſay in their hearts that*

hat there is no God, and whoſe Life is a con- Cauſe
inued chain of Sins. It muſt be obſerved in IV.
he next place, that when St. *Paul* cites theſe
Words out of the XIV *Pſalm* in the Epiſtle to
he *Romans*, Chap. III. he does it with a de-
ign to ſhew, that the *Jews* were not much
better than the Heathens, and that they had
as much need of a Saviour. * *What then, are
we better than they? No in no wiſe, for we have
before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they
are all under ſin.* This is the Aſſertion which
St. *Paul* maintains, and which he proves from
that complaint which *David* made of Old,
† *There is not one that does good*, &c. From
whence he concludes, *that all mouths muſt be
ſtopped, and that all the World is become guilty
before God*; ſo that the Law of *Moſes* could
neither juſtify nor ſanctify the *Jews*. But he
teaches at the ſame time, that Chriſt was
come to reſcue Men out of that miſerable
Condition. And it were a ſtrange thing if
we muſt ſtill ſay of Chriſtians, *That there is
none that does good, no not one.*

2. This anſwer is to be applied to that
place in the *Epheſians*, where it is ſaid, || *That
we are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, for to the
ſame end theſe Words are quoted. I do not
deny but all Men abſtracting from the Divine
Grace, are to be conſidered as dead in their
Sins. That is St. *Paul*'s meaning in that place;

* Rom. III. 9. † V. 19. || Epheſ. II. 1.

he

Part I. he ſpeaks here of the natural State of Me and particularly of Heathens; which was State of Corruption and Death, in which the had periſhed had not God taken pity upo them. But the Apoſtle intends to make th *Epheſians* ſenſible of that unparallel'd Merc of God by which they were Converted t Chriſtianity, being but poor Heathens be fore, who were dead in their ſins, and ob noxious to the Wrath of God. He does no ſay to them, *you are dead in your ſins*; it is falſifying the Text to cite it ſo, and to ſay *we are dead in our ſins*; but *you were dead* he ſpeaks of the times paſt when they wer Heathens; * *Among whom*, ſays he, ſpeakin of the *Jews*, *we had our Converſation in time paſt, in the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling the de ſires of the fleſh and of the mind*, but now, h adds, *God has quickned us together with Chriſt both you that were Heathens, and we that wer Jews, are raiſed again from this ſpiritual Deat by virtue of God's great Mercy.* This is th true meaning of that place, which gives us lively Idea of Mens Natural Corruption, an of that happy State to which Chriſt has exalt ed them. I do not deny but that many Chri ſtians, are ſtill in the ſame condition wit Heathens, or very near it, being dead in thei Sins, and following the courſe of this World but this can be ſaid only of bad Chriſtian

* Epheſ. II. 3. & 5, &c.

d not of thoſe who have felt the Divine Cauſe
d Sanctifying Vertue of the Chriſtian Reli- IV.
on.

3. It will be further ſaid, That we muſt eeds acknowledge, that all Men without exption are Sinners, becauſe that is St. *John*'s octrine, * *If we ſay that we have no ſin we deive our ſelves.* That is a Truth which no an denies, becauſe it is too evident both om Scripture and Experience. But we muſt ke care to underſtand this Propoſition ight, *that all Men are ſinners*, and that we xplain it ſo, as that it may comport with at juſt difference we are to make between ood and bad Men; elſe under a pretence at all Men are Sinners, the diſtinction beween Virtue and Vice will be taken away. It fit to remark upon this occaſion, that the cripture does not give the name of *Sinners* to l Men, but only to the wicked and impious, is may be ſeen in the whole Book of *Pſalms.* hen we ſay then, that we are all poor nners we muſt know in what ſenſe we y it.

As to theſe Words, *If we ſay that we have o ſin we deceive our ſelves.* It is viſible that t. *John* ſays this upon two accounts, which elate to two ſorts of Sins, into which Men ay fall. Firſt there are great Sins, there is at Corruption in which Men lived before

* 1 John I. 8.

their

Part I. their Converſion. In this regard St. *John* might ſay to thoſe he writes to, who were new Converted Chriſtians, that they were all Sinners, meaning, that they had all been ſo; for indeed both *Gentiles* and *Jews* had been extreamly Corrupt. Secondly, There are Sins, into which thoſe whoſe Regeneration is not yet perfect, may fall; as there are Infirmities from which the moſt Regenerate Men, are not free. In this ſenſe all Men are Sinners, and the Chriſtians to whom St. *John* directs his Epiſtle, were all Sinners alſo, tho' already Converted. But the Queſtion is, Whether a true Chriſtian ſins like other Men, and whether he who is a *Sinner*, taking that word according to the ordinary uſe of Scripture, that is to ſay, one in whom Sin reigns, is a true Chriſtian? That can never be ſaid. To this purpoſe we may hear St. *John* himſelf in the III Chapter of the ſame Epiſtle; where he expreſly tells us, *That he who is born of God does not commit Sin, that whoever ſinneth is of the Devil, and that by this we may know the Children of God and the Children of the Devil.* Are not theſe Words very plain? Who can have the Confidence after this; to excuſe Corruption by ſaying, *we are all Sinners?* But yet it is not only ſaid that we are all Sinners by theſe Men, but beſides, that we are all great wretched and abominable Sinners. It is no wonder that Men who have ſuch Sentiments, ſhould be ſo Corrupt.

4. But

Cause IV.

4. But to this, there is a reply at hand, to shew that the justest Men are guilty of very frequent Sins, and it is taken from these words, *The just Man sins seven times a day.* I might let this alone, because I am engaged only to answer those Places of Scripture which are wrested into an ill sense about this matter. And this, that *the just Man sins seven times a-day*, is no where to be found in the Bible. Those who quote these words as if they were Scripture; will pretend no doubt, that they are contained, in *Prov.* xxiv. 16. But there is nothing like this in the Sacred Text. These are the words of *Solomon*, *a just Man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: But the wicked shall fall into Mischief.* *Solomon* speaks of the frequent Afflictions of good Men, and particularly of the ill usage they meet with from wicked Men. In the 15 Verse he addresses himself to the wicked, and tells them, that it is in vain for them, to lay wait for, and to persecute the Just, for, adds he, *a just Man falleth seven times, and riseth up again, but the wicked shall fall into Mischief and perish.* The meaning is, that God takes care of the Just, and that if he permits that they should fall into many Calamities, he does likewise deliver them. This is asserted almost in the same words, *Psal.* xxxvii. 24. *Though the just fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.* To the same purpose we are told, *Job* V. 19. *He shall*

Part I. *deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee :* This admits of no difficulty, and all Interpreters are agreed about it. And yet for all that, as Men are apt to entertain every thing which excuses Corruption; this Proverb, *That the just Man sins seven times a day*, prevails and passes for an Article of Faith. Is it not a lamentable thing, that Men should be thus obstinately bent to wrest the Scripture, into a sense favourable to Corruption, and that they should dare to falsify it at this rate?

There are many falsifyings in the way of citing this Passage. 1. Whereas *Solomon* says only *the just*, he is made to say *the justest man*, to give the greater force and extent to this Sentence, to debase Piety the more, and to insinuate, that the best and holiest Men, are great Sinners. 2. *Solomon* is made to say, that *the just sins*, but he does not say that, he says only that *the just falls*. I know that to *fall*, signifies sometimes to *sin*, but *falling* denotes likewise very frequently, *to be afflicted*, and a Man is blind who does not see, that in this Text, the word *fall* is used in this second sense. The 17 Verse which comes immediately after that which we are now examining, proves it beyond exception, *Rejoyce not when thy enemy falleth*, &c. Besides those who are acquainted with the Sacred style, know, that it does not usually express the sins of Infirmity, to which the Just are subject, by the word *fall*,

fall, that word importing commonly, the fall of wicked Men. 3. *Solomon* is made to say, *That the justest Man sins seven times a day.* This is another falsifying, an addition to the Text, which is of no small consequence. *Seven times a day*, is not in the Text, there is only *seven times.* Every body knows that Seven times signifies, many times. And so the meaning would be, that the Just do nothing else but transgress; that many times a Day he falls into sin. But who does not see, that this would be the description of a Man in whom Sin reigns, and who is habitually ingaged in it, and not the Character of a good Man? I do not say, but that Just Men have their weak sides, and fall sometimes into Sin; this happens more or less according to the degree of their Regeneration; but it is Impious to say, that their Life is spent in continual Sins, and that they offend God at every foot; and yet this is what Men would establish from this Maxim, *That the justest Man sins seven times a day.* Those who have a mind to quote the Scripture; should neither add to, nor diminish from it, they should not alter the Words, nor divide Sentences from what goes before and what follows; for otherwise there is no Absurdity nor Impiety, which may not be proved from the Word of God.

Cause IV.

5. But our Adversaries will say, Whether that Place is alledged right or wrong, it does

Part I. not matter much, ſince there are others which ſay the ſame thing, in ſtronger Expreſſions. Does not St. *Paul* ſay, *Rom.* VII. * *I am carnal, ſold under ſin, for in me dwelleth no good thing; for that which I do I allow not: and what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that do I. I ſee a Law in my Members, warring againſt the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members. O wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this Death!* If St. *Paul* himſelf ſpeaks after this manner, who can deny, that the greateſt Saints fall into very heinous Sins, and have ſtill a large ſtock of Corruption in them?

Thoſe who draw this Inference from the Words of St. *Paul*, make him ſpeak thát which is quite contrary to his thoughts. He is ſo far from ſaying any thing that favours the cauſe of Sinners; that on the contrary his deſign is to prove, the neceſſity of a good Life, and to make Men ſenſible of the Efficacy of the Goſpel in reference to Sanctification. He had this in his view, in the VII Chapter to the *Romans*, where he repreſents the difference between a Corrupt and a Regenerated Man, and between the Condition of Man under the Law, and his State under the Goſpel. So that all he ſays of the Carnal Man ſold un-

* Rom. VII. 14, 15, &c.

der

er Sin, *&c.* is to be underſtood of a Corrupt Man, living under the Law.

Cauſe IV.

I am not ignorant that Divines, otherwiſe Able and Pious Men, have thought that St. *Paul* ſpeaks of himſelf in this Chapter, and that he repreſents there, what paſſes within a Regenerate Man; but I know likewiſe that a great many Orthodox Divines, have rejected that Expoſition, as contrary to the ſcope of the Apoſtle, to the conſtant Doctrine of the New Teſtament, and to the Spirit of the Chriſtian Religion. It is a ſad thing that when a place is capable of two Senſes, Men ſhould pitch upon that, which comes nearer to the Pretenſions of Sinners. I do not intend here to enter into a Diſpute, nor to offend thoſe of a contrary Opinion; I am perſuaded that they have no deſign to contenance Corruption; but as in all things we ought to ſeek the Truth, and as the Truth here, is of great Conſequence for the promoting of Piety, ſo I entreat thoſe who might have Scruples concerning thoſe Words, to make theſe following Reflections.

1. Let them ſeriouſly and impartially conſider, Whether it may be ſaid, that St. *Paul* was a Carnal Man ſold under Sin, a Man who did no Good but Evil, and a Man involved in Death; theſe are the ſtrongeſt Expreſſions which can be uſed, and which the Scripture uſes to give as the Character of Wicked and Impious Men? To believe this of St. *Paul*, is

Part I. so very hard, that a Man must be able to digest any thing, who is not startled at it.

2. I desire them to attend to the Drift of St. *Paul*, he had undertaken to shew, that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, did not introduce Licentiousness; this he had proved in the whole VI Chapter, as may appear by the reading it. Is it likely that in the VII Chapter, he should overturn all that he had established in the preceding, and say, that the holiest Men are captivated to the Law of Sin? If this be St. *Paul*'s Doctrine, what becomes of the Efficacy of Faith to produce Holiness, and how could he have answered that Objection which he proposes to himself, Chap. VI. 1. and 15. *Shall we continue in sin, shall we sin, we that are under Grace?* St. *Paul* ought to have granted the Objection, if it be true, that the most Regenerate, are sold to Sin. But it is plain, that in the VII Chapter he goes on to prove what he had laid down already, to wit, that the Gospel Sanctifies Men, and not only this, but that the Gospel alone can Sanctify Men, and that the Law could not. This is the Scope of the whole Chapter.

In the very first Four Verses, he shews that *Christians are no longer under the Law*, nor consequently under Sin, *and that they are dead to the Law, that they may bring forth fruits unto God.* He expresses himself more clearly yet in the 5th Verse, where he says, that there is a considerable difference, between those who

who are under the Law, and thoſe who are in Jeſus Chriſt. He plainly diſtinguiſhes theſe two States, and the time paſt from the preſent. *When we were in the fleſh*, ſays he, *the motions of ſin which were by the Law, did work in our Members to bring forth fruits unto death, but now we are delivered from the Law, that we ſhould ſerve in newneſs of Spirit.* Theſe are the two States; the State paſt was a State of Corruption, the preſent State is a State of Holineſs. But as it might have been inferred from thence, that the Law was the cauſe of Sin, the Apoſtle refutes that imagination, from the 7th to the 14th Verſe. Cauſe IV.

After this, he deſcribes the miſerable Condition of a Man who is not Regenerated by Grace, and who ſtill is under the Law. He begins to do this from the 14th Verſe, by ſaying, *the Law is ſpiritual, but I am carnal ſold under ſin*, &c. And here no doubt it will be ſaid, that St. *Paul* ſpeaks of himſelf, and not of thoſe who are under the Law; for ſays he, *I am carnal*, &c. But one may eaſily ſee that the Apoſtle uſes here a way of ſpeaking which is very ordinary in Diſcourſe, and by which he that ſpeaks puts himſelf in the room of thoſe he ſpeaks of. And St. *Paul* had the more reaſon to expreſs himſelf after this manner, becauſe he had been himſelf under the Law, before he was Converted to Chriſtianity. There are many Inſtances in Scripture of this way of ſpeaking, and we

Part I. find one in this very Chapter which is beyond exception. St. *Paul* ſays in the 9th Verſe, *I was alive without the Law once*, &c. If we do not admit here a figurative expreſſion, or if theſe words are ſtrictly taken; then we muſt ſay, that there was a time when this Apoſtle was without Law, which is both falſe and ridiculous. As therefore it is plain, that when he ſays, Verſe 9. *I was without Law*, he ſpeaks of the State of thoſe Men to whom the Law was not given; ſo it is unqueſtionable, that when he ſays, *I am carnal*, &c. he deſcribes the State of a Corrupt Man living under the Law, and not his own. This is the Key which lets us into the meaning of his Diſcourſe, in which the Law is mentioned, almoſt in every Verſe.

3. Laſtly, That which makes it as clear as the Sun, that this is his true ſenſe, is, that when the Apoſtle conſiders and ſpeaks of himſelf as a Chriſtian, he uſes quite another Language. To be ſatisfy'd of this we need but run over this Chapter, and compare it with other places in his Epiſtles.

If he ſays here, Verſe 7, 8. *That concupiſcence is felt and reigns within a Man who is under the Law*; he declares, Gal. V. 24. *That Chriſtians have crucified the fleſh with the luſts of it.* If he ſays, Verſe 9, 10. *That ſin lives within him, and that he is dead*; he had ſaid, Chap. VI. 2, 11. *That he was dead unto ſin, and living unto God through Jeſus Chriſt.* If he ſays, Verſe

Verſe 14. *That he is carnal and ſold under ſin,* it is apparent that he does not ſpeak of himſelf, ſince Chap. VIII. 1, and 8. he tells us, *That thoſe who are in Chriſt Jeſus are not in the fleſh, and that thoſe who are in the fleſh can not pleaſe God, and have not his Spirit.* If he ſays here, Verſe 19. *I know that in me dwelleth no good thing*; he declares *Eph.* III. 17. *that Chriſt dwells in our hearts by Faith.* If he ſays, Verſe 19. *The good that I would, I do not, and the evil which I hate that I do*; he teſtifies in many places, *That the faithful do that which is good, and abſtain from evil.* If he complains, Verſe 21, 22, 23. *of his being captivated to the Law of Sin*; he teaches, Chap. VI. 17, 22. *That Chriſtians are no longer the ſervants of Sin, that they are freed from it, and become the ſervants of Righteouſneſs.* If he crys out, Ver. 24. *O wretched Man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this Death!* It is manifeſt, that theſe are not the Expreſſions of a Man Regenerated by Jeſus Chriſt; for he adds immediately, *I thank God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. There is therefore now no Condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit. For the Law of the Spirit of Life which is in Chriſt Jeſus, has made me free from the Law of ſin and Death,* Chap. VIII. 12.

Cauſe IV.

Now let any body judge, whether what is ſaid in this Chapter, can be applied to St. *Paul*, conſidered as a Regenerated Chriſtian?

Can

Part I. Can it be ſaid, that Concupiſcence reigns in him who has crucify'd it? That Sin lives in him who is dead to Sin? That he who is not in the Fleſh, is a carnal Man? That he who is freed from Sin, is ſold to Sin? That no good thing dwells in thoſe in whom Chriſt dwells? That a Man is at the ſame time miſerable and happy, a Slave, and yet delivered by Jeſus Chriſt, dead and alive? To ſay this, is it not to call Good Evil, and Evil Good; to put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs? Is it not to admit downright Contradictions in Scripture? But eſpecially, is it not to open a door to Licentiouſneſs, and to give us a ſtrange Notion of a Regenerate Man?

By all that has been ſaid, I do not mean that there are no remnants of Corruption, in thoſe who are Regenerated. Neither do I deny, but that in thoſe whoſe Regeneration is but begun, there is ſome ſuch ſtruggle as that which is deſcribed in this Chapter. This is *Muſculus*'s Notion, in his Commentary upon the * *Romans*. But that this Chapter ſhould be the Picture of a Regenerate Man, and of a true Member of Chriſt, is a thing ſo contrary to the Goſpel, and to all the Ideas of Religion, that one can hardly imagine, how there could ever be Men, who believed it.

III. But that which Corrupt Chriſtians endeavour to prove by thoſe Paſſages I have mentioned, they think to put out of all queſtion,

* Page 118.

by

by the Examples of those Saints whose Sins are recorded in Holy Writ. To this purpose they alledge *Noah*, *Lot*, *Abraham*, *Sampson*, *David*, *Solomon*, St. *Paul*, St. *Peter*, &c. and from these Instances they conclude, that since those great Saints, fell into such heavy Sins; Sin is no Obstacle to Salvation, and that it is not inconsistent with Piety. Cause IV.

If we did make a right use of the Word of God, we would draw a quite contrary inference from these Instances; and consider that it is absurd to plead Precedents, against an express Law. If we must needs be governed by Examples; we ought certainly to chuse the good, and not the bad ones, to imitate what is praise worthy in the Saints, and not what deserves blame; their Faults being like so many Beacons, set up to keep us from striking upon the same Rocks.

But to answer directly; I say first, that we are a little too apt to rank among Saints, some Illustrious Persons mention'd in the Sacred History; who perhaps were nothing less than Holy Men, and who it may be did perish in their Sins, tho' God thought fit to make use of them, to carry on the Designs of his Providence, and to deliver his People. It would be a rash thing to pronounce upon any Man's Salvation, or to speak irreverently of those great Men; But the instance of *Solomon*, whose Salvation has been at all times question by Divines; should teach us, not to be so hasty

Part I. haſty, in placing thoſe among Saints, of whom the Scripture ſpeaks with ſome honour, and in ſheltering our ſelves under their Examples.

As to thoſe who by the Teſtimony of the Scripture it ſelf, did truly fear God; I might obſerve that they fell but once into thoſe Sins related in the Sacred Hiſtory; which would by no means favour impenitent and habitual Sinners. But this anſwer does not fully ſatisfie; for beſides that it ſuppoſes a thing which in reſpect of ſeveral Perſons cannot certainly be known; there are ſome Sins which are ſo black, ſuch as Adultery and Apoſtacy, that a Man can hardly commit them more than once, except he is altogether ſold to Sin, and further, any one of thoſe Sins is incompatible with a State of Regeneration.

We muſt therefore frankly own, that when thoſe great Men ſinned in that manner, they did not act like Saints, that they put themſelves into a State, which conſidered in it ſelf, was a State of Damnation, and that they had periſhed, if they had continued in it; for as *Ezekiel* ſays, Chap. XXXIII. 18. *When the righteous turneth from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity, he ſhall even die thereby.* We may judge of the heinouſneſs and danger of thoſe ſins, by the degree of Repentance, which ſome of theſe Men have expreſſed for them, and by the publick acknowledgments they made of them. What alarms

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was *David* in, when he compoſed the LI *Pſalm*, which is the *Pſalm* of his Repentance? What a deep ſenſe had St. *Peter* of his fault, in denying his Maſter? What do then ſuch Examples ſignify to thoſe who live in Sin and Impenitency; who can be ſure that God will give him the Grace, to recover himſelf as thoſe holy Men did? Thoſe who preſume to ſin as they did, in hopes that they ſhall in like manner wipe off their Sins by Repentance and Amendment, reaſon juſt like a Man, who ſhould ſwallow down Poyſon, and conclude, it would not kill him, becauſe ſome who have been Poyſoned, have eſcaped Death. Cauſe IV.

But that which deſerves here our greateſt Conſideration, is the time which thoſe Saints lived in. There is great difference between us Chriſtians, and the good Men under the Old Teſtament. Men before Chriſt, had not by a great deal that Light which we have; and did not know as we do, the Duties of Holineſs. Our Saviour teaches us that diſtinction, when he ſays, * *That John the Baptiſt was the greateſt among thoſe who were born of a Woman, but that the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than John the Baptiſt*; That is to ſay, that Chriſtians have a much greater Light than either *John* Baptiſt, or all the ancient Prophets had. Now the mea-

* Matth. XI. 11.

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Part I. ſure of Knowledge, ought to be the meaſure of Piety; and therefore Chriſtians ought to excel the *Jews* in Holineſs. What God did bear with at that time, would be in us altogether intolerable; and how can it be lawful for us to imitate the Ancients in their Vices, when we are bound to ſurpaſs their Vertues?

This Principle is of great moment, and without it we can hardly ſilence Prophane Perſons. A Libertine inſiſting upon Preſidents, will ſay, that Polygamy, the keeping of Concubines, Murder, Divorce upon the ſlighteſt pretences, and ſuch like Diſorders; are not ſo criminal as they are imagined to be; he will produce the Inſtances of *Abraham* and *Jacob*, of the Judges of *Iſrael*, of *David* and the *Jews*. Far be it from us to detract from the honour and praiſe due to thoſe Ancient Worthies; They have done much for the Time they lived in. But God forbid too, that we ſhould leſſen the Glory and the Advantages of the Chriſtian Religion. If we ſpeak like Chriſtians, we will ſay, That God in his Goodneſs did paſs over many things, by reaſon of the Time, and of the natural Temper of the *Jews*, who were a groſs and carnal People. Our Saviour's Anſwer to the *Phariſees* concerning Divorce, is very much to our purpoſe. * *Moſes ſuffered you to put*

* Matth. XIX. 8.

away

away your Wives, but from the beginning it was not so; And then he adds, that whosoever should imitate the *Jews*, and do that which had been done and tolerated till then, should be guilty of Adultery. Cause IV.

We may easily apply this Answer to the instance of St. *Peter*, since before our Saviour's Ascension, the Apostles were weak as yet, and possessed with various Prejudices. But I think my self bound to add a Word or two concerning the Example of St. *Paul*, because it is commonly mistaken. That Apostle says, * *That he was a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, who was not worthy to be called an Apostle, and that he was the cheif of Sinners.* At the first hearing of these Words many imagine, that St. *Paul* had been a profligate Man, a Swearer, and a Godless Wretch: and yet he means nothing else, but that he had once persecuted the Church. For otherwise, St. *Paul* before his Conversion to Christianity, was a good Man, and his Life was blameless and exemplary; for this he appeals to God, and the *Jews*, *Acts* XXIII. 1. and XXVI. 4. If he did persecute the Church then, it was through a blind Zeal and Ignorance; and for that reason, as he tells us himself, Verse 13, *He obtained mercy from God.* Is not this quite another Case, than that of those Christians, who knowingly and wilfully allow themselves in Sin?

* 1 Tim. I. 13, 15. 1 Cor. XV. 9.

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Part I. It is another miſtake to make St. *Paul* ſay, as ſome do, *That he is the greateſt of Sinners*; he does not ſay that, he ſays only, *That he is the chief or the firſt of thoſe Sinners whom Jeſus Chriſt did ſave.* His meaning is, that he holds the firſt rank among Converted Sinners, that he is a remarkable Inſtance of the Divine Mercy, and that Jeſus had begun by him, to ſhew his Clemency and Goodneſs, Thus he explains himſelf, Verſe 16. *For this cauſe*, ſays he, *I obtained Mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him.* This is exactly what he meant; for as to what ſome imagine, that St. *Paul* out of Humility acknowledges himſelf the greateſt of all Sinners; I think that Explication is wrong, and that it neither agrees with Truth nor Piety, nor good Senſe. A good Man is not bound to think himſelf worſe than the greateſt Sinners; on the contrary, he ought to bleſs God, for that Good which the Divine Grace has wrought in him.

IV. But as the laſt Refuge of Sinners is the Mercy of God, ſo they commonly abuſe thoſe Places, which ſet forth the greatneſs of that Mercy. They found this principally upon theſe Words, *Where Sin does abound, Grace does much more abound.* Under the Covert of this ſhort Sentence, the moſt flagitious Sinners think themſelves ſafe. But the bare reading St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe, will ſoon con-

convince us, that this is to wreſt the Scripture into a falſe and pernicious Senſe. The Apoſtle's Deſign is to ſhew, that all Men being rendred Sinners in *Adam*, and by the Law; the Goodneſs of God was ſo great, that he was willing to Save them through Jeſus Chriſt. In order to this, to eſtabliſh this Truth, he had proved that before Chriſt, Sin and Death reigned every where; not only among the Heathens, but alſo among the *Jews*; upon this he adds, *That where Sin did abound, Grace did much more abound*; to ſignify God's having mercy on them, when they were involved in Sin and Death. In a word, St. *Paul* ſets the happy Condition to which Men were advanced by Jeſus Chriſt, in oppoſition to that which they were in before. This is the ſenſe of that place, and the drift of the whole Epiſtle. Can any one infer from thence, that now we may freely ſin, and that Grace will exert it ſelf towards us, whatever ſins we may commit?

Cauſe IV.

It is fit to obſerve beſides, that when St. *Paul* ſpeaks of Grace, he does not only mean the pardoning, but likewiſe the ſanctifying Grace; which deſtroys the pretenſion of the Libertines. The Apoſtle himſelf confutes it with a great deal of vehemence. He foreſaw that ſome would argue like thoſe we now contend with; and he makes this Objection to himſelf, * *What then? ſhall we con-*

* Rom. VI. 1, 2, 3, 11, 12.

Part I. *tinue in ſin, that Grace may abound?* And this is his Anſwer, *God forbid! how ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live any longer therein? We who have been baptized into Chriſt's Death, that we ſhould walk in newneſs of Life. Reckon ye alſo your ſelves dead unto Sin, but alive unto God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Let not Sin therefore reign in your mortal Body, that you ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof.* The Apoſtle purſues theſe Exhortations to the end of the Chapter.

2. The Promiſes and Inſtances of God's Mercy, are frequently alſo taken in a ſenſe which favours Corruption and Security. All that the Goſpel ſays upon this head, is interpreted by vicious Men, as if the Son of God was come into the World, to give Men a licenſe to ſin. To this purpoſe the Inſtances of that Woman who was a ſinner, of *Zacheus* and the converted Thief, are often alledged; as likewiſe the Parable of the Prodigal Son, of the Publican, and of the Labourers. And from theſe Inſtances, as well as from our Saviour's Declarations, * *That he is not come to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* It is concluded, that the greateſt Sinners may obtain Salvation, as well as the Juſt. But if thoſe who quote theſe Inſtances, did narrowly examine them, they would read in them their own Condemnation. For firſt, all theſe

* Mark II. 17.

Sin-

Sinners mentioned in the Goſpel, did repent and were Converted. That Woman who had been a Notorious Sinner expreſſes the moſt lively Sorrow; the Publican ſmites his Breaſt, the Prodigal comes to himſelf again, and deteſts his former Exceſſes; *Zacheus*, if he was an unjuſt Man, reſtores fourfold. From theſe Inſtances we may very well infer, that God never rejects returning Sinners. But even this, is an invincible Argument, that there is no mercy for thoſe, who perſiſt in their Sins, and that too in hopes of Pardon. Cauſe IV.

Beſides, we muſt know that our Saviour's deſign in all theſe Parables and Inſtances, was to inform Men that he was come to invite the greateſt Sinners to Repentance; and eſpecially to let the *Jews* underſtand, that for all the high Opinion they had of their own Dignity and Merit, the Heathens who lived in the greateſt Corruption, were to be admitted into God's Covenant, and to have a Share in his Favonr. Which actually happened to all thoſe Heathens, who did believe in Jeſus Chriſt. Theſe Inſtances and Parables then repreſent the State Men were in at that time, and not the State of thoſe, who are entred already into the Chriſtian Church. It can never be ſaid too much, nor remembred too often in the reading of the Goſpel; that there is a vaſt difference, between thoſe Heathens, who never heard a word of God or Jeſus Chriſt; and Chriſtians who are born

Part I. in the Church and live in the Covenant with God.

Thus I think I have examined thoſe Places of Scripture, which are moſt commonly abuſed by the Libertines. If I have omitted any, I hope what has been ſaid in this Chapter, may ſerve to ſuggeſt pertinent and ſatisfactory Anſwers to them.

CAUSE

Cauſe V.

CAUSE V.

A falſe Modeſty.

CORruption is not wholly to be imputed to that Ignorance, or to thoſe prejudices and looſe Opinions which prevail among Chriſtians. For Men do not always ſin through want of Knowledge, or out of meer Wantonneſs and Libertiniſm. There are many who acknowledge the Viciouſneſs of the Age, and the neceſſity of a good Life; and yet they neglect their Duties intirely, or at leaſt they are very remiſs in the doing of it; acting for the moſt part, againſt their own Perſuaſions.

There muſt be then other Cauſes of Corruption in Men, beſides thoſe which we have hitherto diſcovered. It is neceſſary to ſearch into theſe, and to find out, if poſſible, why many Perſons, who want no Inſtruction, and are ſolicited by the Motions of their own Conſciences, to embrace the ſide of Vertue and Piety, do notwithſtanding, continue in Vice and Corruption.

This ſeems to proceed chiefly from two Diſpoſitions, which Men are commonly in.

On the one hand, they are reſtrained by an ill Shame, from acting ſuitably to the Sen-

Part I. timents of their own Conſciences; and on the other hand, they put off their Converſion, hoping they ſhall one Day make up all the Irregularities of their Conduct, by Repentance. I look upon theſe two Diſpoſitions, as two of the principal Cauſes of Corruption, and therefore I thought it might be proper, to Conſider them both diſtinctly. I deſign to Treat of *falſe Modeſty* in this Chapter, and to ſhew, 1. The Nature, and 2. The Effects of it.

1. By *falſe Modeſty*, I mean that Shame, which hinders Men *to do* that which they know to be their Duty. I call this Shame vicious or ill, to diſtinguiſh it from another kind of Shame, which is good and commendable, which conſiſts, in being aſhamed to do ill things. If *falſe Shame* is a Source of Corruption; that other Shame which reſtrains from Evil, is a Principle of Vertue, and a Preſervative againſt Sin; and therefore it ought to be as carefully cheriſhed and maintained, as vicious Shame ſhould be avoided or ſhaken off. For as ſoon as the ſenſe of this commendable Shame is gone, Innocency is irrecoverably loſt. It is a part of the Character of Sinners in Scripture, that their Wickedneſs raiſes no bluſhing, or confuſion in them.

I ſay then, that this falſe Shame, keeps Men from doing at the ſame time what they know and approve to be their Duty; and it

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is under that Notion particularly. that I am to consider it here. It is not my design to speak of that Shame, which arises from Ignorance, or Contempt, and which is to be met with in those profane and worldly Men, who because they do not know Religion, or judge it unworthy of their Application, think it a disgrace to follow its Maxims. I refer such Men to the first Chapter of this Book, and to some further Considerations, which I am to insist upon elsewhere. The Shame I speak of at present, supposes some Knowledge in the Mind, and some value for, and inclination to Piety. From whence it appears, how dangerous the Effects of that Shame are, and how important it is to know and observe them; since it seduces and corrupts even those who are none of the worst Men, and of whom otherwise, we might reasonably hope well. Cause V.

Now to apprehend the Nature of this vicious Shame; it must be observed, that Shame commonly springs from two Causes; Sometimes it proceeds from the Nature of the thing we are ashamed of, or from the Opinion we have of it: Thus Men are ashamed of things, which either are, or appear dishonest in their Nature. But sometimes also Shame is an effect of the regard we bear to other Mens Judgment, and then we are ashamed to do things which may bring Contempt upon us, and disgrace us in the World.

Part I. One may ſoon perceive that the Shame that is vicious does not ariſe from the firſt of theſe Cauſes. Religion has nothing in it, that is ſhameful and diſhoneſt; for far from that, it is of all things the moſt Comely and Honourable, and the moſt worthy of a Man; and it appears ſuch, even to thoſe, who by reaſon of a groundleſs Shame, dare not practiſe the Rules of it. The true Cauſe then of this falſe Modeſty, is a feeble regard to Mens Judgment, and a fear of falling under their Contempt or Hatred, Piety is little practiſed in the World, it is deſpiſed, and it is hated; and theſe are the three principal Cauſes of vicious Shame.

1. Piety is little practiſed in the World; few People love or practiſe it. Now a Man is very inclinable to do that which is commonly done; he thinks it is ſafeſt and moſt honourable, to ſide with the Multitude: he is afraid of making himſelf Ridiculous, by being ſingular. It is a Maxim generally received, That we ought to comply with Cuſtom, and to do as others do. The Reaſon then why many have not the Courage to be on the Side of Religion, is becauſe that Side is deſerted and abandoned.

2. Piety is often deſpiſed in the World. It is looked upon as a mean and diſgraceful thing. The ſtrictneſs of a Man, who Acts upon Principles of Religion and Conſcience, is imputed to weakneſs of Mind, ſingularity of

of Humour, or Caprice, and ſometimes to Hypocriſy and Pride. Thoſe who profeſs Devotion and Piety, are turned into Ridicule: And on the contrary, it is thought honourable to comply in every thing, with the Ways and Faſhions of the Age. Tho' theſe Sentiments are very unjuſt, yet they make a great Impreſſion, becauſe few People have Firmneſs enough to ſlight the Judgment and Contempt of Men. We have naturally a quick ſenſe of Honour, and nothing is ſo unſupportable to Self-love, as Contempt; ſo that this Temptation is dangerous, and it eaſily produces in a Man a falſe Shame, which diverts him from Religion. Cauſe V.

3. Piety does likewiſe procure the Hatred of the World; becauſe a good Life accuſes, condemns, and reproaches thoſe who live ill. Beſides, Religion obliges us ſometimes to do things which diſpleaſe and offend Men. How cautious ſoever it may be, it is much, if upon many occaſions, it does not ſtir up their Jealouſy, their Hatred, or their Spleen. A good Man is often Bound to refuſe what is deſired of him. He is unacquainted with the Maxims of that mean and fawning Complaiſance, which is neceſſary to get every bodies Love. Many for this Reaſon neglect Piety. They dare not let ſhine a Light, which diſcovers the Weakneſſes and Errors of others; and Fear and Shame together make them think, that it would be Ill-breeding,

as

Part I. as well as a piece of Imprudence, to follow a Courſe of Life which might render them odious.

From theſe Conſiderations it appears already, that this Shame is one of the general Fountains, of Corruption, and that it can produce none but very ill Effects; firſt upon thoſe in whom it is, and next upon other Men.

1. The natural Effect of vicious Shame, is to diſſuade a Man from his Duty, and to draw him into Sin. It makes his Knowledge uſeleſs, it fruſtrates the warnings which his Conſcience gives him; and ſo it extinguiſhes in him the Principles of Vertue. Thoſe who are poſſeſſed with this Shame, dare neither Speak nor Act as they ought, they diſſemble their true Sentiments, they offer violence to their Conſciences, they have not the Courage to ſpeak the Truth, or to reprove their Neighbours, when occaſion requires; they are loath to confeſs or to amend their Faults, in a Word, they frequently neglect the moſt indiſpenſable Duties of Piety and Charity: And all this, becauſe they are checkt by a falſe Shame.

But if this Shame hinders us to do Good, it does as forcibly prompt us to Evil: As ſoon as a Man thinks it a diſgrace to do Good, and to diſtinguiſh himſelf by a Chriſtian Deportment; he preſently conceives likewiſe, that it would be a Shame to him, not to imitate

tate the Irregularities of others. Hence it is that we applaud Sin, that we are carried away by the Solicitations, or Examples of Perſons of Authority; that we cannot withſtand the Entreaties of Friends; that we ingage in unjuſt Enterprizes, or criminal Diverſions; and that we fall into many other wicked Practices. A very little Reflection upon our ſelves, will eaſily convince us, that Shame produces all theſe ill Effects. A Heathen Author * has proved long ago, in an Excellent Tract, That falſe Modeſty is one of the greateſt obſtacles to Vertue; and that Men commit many Faults and bring a great deal of Miſchief upon themſelves, only becauſe they dare not refuſe to comply with others. Cauſe V.

2. The Effects of this Shame are not leſs fatal in reſpect of other Men. As it proceeds from the regard we bear to their Judgments, ſo it uſually ſhews it ſelf in their Company; ſo that we cannot but ſcandalize and corrupt them, when we govern our ſelves by the ſuggeſtions of this falſe Shame. For not to mention here the Scandal which this gives to good Men; thoſe very Perſons for whoſe ſake we uſe ſuch ſinful compliances, and who deſpiſe Religion; conceive yet a greater Contempt of it, when they ſee, that thoſe who ought to ſupport it's Intereſt, are aſhamed of it, and dare not openly profeſs it. They

* *Plutarch.*

judge

Part I. judge that Piety muſt be indeed a very mean and contemptible thing; and when they obſerve that Men are afraid to diſpleaſe them, they take ſuch an Aſcendant over them, that Vertue dares no more appear in their preſence. Beſides, that ſuch an Indulgence towards Vice, gives a new force to it. If vicious Men are not reproved, it confirms them in their ill Habits; if they are imitated, they are Authorized; if we are aſhamed to confeſs our Faults before them, we do not heal the Scandal which we have given them, and that is the greater for having been occaſioned by Men who are thought Pious, and not by Libertines. But that we may be the more ſenſible of the pernicious effects of this kind of Shame, we ought to take notice of three Things, which are very remarkable in this matter.

1. Shame is a thing which has an abſolute power over a Man. Other Paſſions may more eaſily be reſiſted; but when Shame has gained an Aſcendant over the Mind, it is extream hard to be conquered, eſpecially if it proceeds from the regard we have for Men; for when it ariſes from a natural Diſpoſition, it may ſooner be overcome. The greateſt Threats and Promiſes will not ſometimes ſhake a Man, who will preſently yield if Shame can be excited within him. How often do we find the moſt vigorous efforts we can make upon our ſelves, and our beſt Reſolutions

ſolutions quite daſhed, by a ſilly Baſhfulneſs? A Jeſt, a bare Look, or a ſlight Apprehenſion of being thought Ridiculous, or a Bigot, is ſometimes enough to Confound us, and to make all our good Purpoſes vaniſh. Cauſe V.

2. It ought to be conſidered, That the Shame we ſpeak of here, reſtrains thoſe Perſons, who in their Hearts are inclined to Vertue; thoſe who live in a profound Ignorance, or in a total Obduration, being not ſuſceptible of this Shame. It ſuppoſes, as has been ſaid, ſome remainder of Conſcience and Knowledge ſoliciting Man to his Duty; but it overcomes that Knowledge and thoſe good Sentiments. We are to impute to this vicious Shame, a great part of the Sins of good Men; and this is one of the Articles upon which they have moſt reaſon to reproach themſelves; as is well known to thoſe who make any reflection upon their Conduct. And if this Shame is able to ſpoil thoſe who otherwiſe are Vertuous, and to extinguiſh their Zeal and Piety; we ought to reckon it among the Principal Cauſes of Corruption.

3. Shame may lead Men to the higheſt Degrees of Wickedneſs. For beſides that a Man ſins againſt his Conſcience, when for fear of Men he dares not do his Duty; beſides that he offends God in a very provoking manner, when he is aſhamed to obey Him, and fears Men more than him; I ſay, that this Shame is apt to betray him into the greateſt Enormities.

Part I. mities. A Man is capable of every thing when he becomes a Slave to other Mens Judgment, and when Complaiſance or Humane Conſideration, have a greater force upon him than the Laws of Religion, and his Duty. Whenever a Man dares not appear good, he dares appear in ſome meaſure wicked. And when he tyes to Vertue an Idea of Shame, he is not far from affixing an Idea of Honour to Vice, and from complying in every thing with the Opinions of looſe and prophane Perſons.

1. Men do not arrive of a ſudden at this degree of Corruption; falſe Shame carries them to it by little and little. It makes one ſin at firſt through Complaiſance, tho' with ſome Reluctancy. By this, Conſcience grows weaker; a Man contracts the Habit of ſlighting its ſuggeſtions, and Vice becomes more familiar to him. Then he begins to ſin more boldly; the ſhame of doing good increaſes, and the ſhame of ſinning grows leſs. In a little time he comes to do out of Cuſtom and Inclination, what he did before but ſeldom, and with ſome inward conflict. From thence he proceeds to an open contempt of Piety, and ſo he forſakes an Intereſt to which he was well affected at firſt, but which this Shame has made him diſlike. Thus many Perſons, who had good Diſpoſitions in their youth, being let looſe into the World, have loſt their Innocence, and are turn'd Libertines and Atheiſts. Now

Now this falſe Modeſty being ſo pernicious we can never labour too much to prevent its ill effects. And this we ſhall ſucceed in, if we ſeriouſly conſider, that there is a great deal both of Error and Cowardice in the Sentiments and Conduct of thoſe, who are hinder'd by Shame, from diſcharging the Duties of Religion and Conſcience: Firſt, there is a great deal of Error in their Proceeding. This Shame is founded upon nothing elſe, but the Judgment which the World makes of Piety. But if thoſe who deſpiſe Religion are in the wrong, as they moſt certainly are; if it is Extravagance and Folly in them, to paſs a falſe Judgment upon Piety; it is a much greater Madneſs in thoſe who underſtand better Things, to ſubſcribe to a Judgment which they know to be Falſe and Erroneous, and to make that the Principle of their Actions. If Vertue is a Thing that is Good, Juſt, Neceſſary, Acceptable to God, and Uſeful to thoſe who Practiſe it; if with it we cannot fail of Happineſs, and if without it there is nothing but Dread and Terror; why ſhould we be aſhamed to give up our ſelves to it? A Wiſe Man ought to eſteem that which deſerves Eſteem, and if Ignorant and Corrupt People are of another Mind, he ought to ſet himſelf above their Judgment, and to deſpiſe the Contempt of the ſenſleſs Multitude. The Judgment of Men cannot make that Juſt which is Unjuſt, nor ſuperſede the Neceſſity of

Cauſe V.

Part I. of what is neceſſary; ſo that it ſhould be of no weight in ſo important a Concernment, as that of our Salvation. Our Happineſs is not to be decided by Man's Eſteem, or Contempt; and the Approbation of God and our Conſcience, is infinitely to be preferred before their groundleſs Opinions.

But if there is ſo much of Error in vicious Shame, there is likewiſe a great deal of Cowardiſe in it. Nothing is more baſe and unworthy, than for a Man to deſert the Intereſt of Vertue, when he is ſolicited by his own Conſcience to adhere to it. Not to have Reſolution enough to do his Duty in ſuch a Caſe, is on the one hand to ſubmit his Reaſon and Conſcience to the Caprice of others, and to depreſs himſelf below the vileſt Things in the World; and on the other it is to have greater Regard for Men than for God. And is there any thing more abject than this Proceeding? Is not this a ſhameful Cowardiſe in a Chriſtian, who is called to profeſs openly his Religion and Faith, and ought to think it his Glory, to maintain the Cauſe of Vertue and Juſtice, in ſpight of all the Contradiction and Contempt of the Age? That Threatning which our Saviour has denounced againſt thoſe, who ſhould not have the Courage to embrace the Chriſtian Profeſſion, or ſhould abandon it, belongs alſo to thoſe mean-ſpirited Chriſtians we are

are now ſpeaking of. * *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and ſinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the Holy Angels.* Cauſe V.

The firſt and chief Remedy, againſt this falſe Shame, is then to be poſſeſſed with the following Reflections. Before all things to have a right Apprehenſion of the Certainty and Importance of Religion; to conſider that it propoſes to us infinite Rewards, but that thoſe Rewards are reſerved only for thoſe, who have the Courage to obſerve its Precepts; to think what Pleaſure and Glory it is, to be approved of God and of one's own Conſcience; To fix deeply this great Truth in our Minds; That Mens Judgment is very inconſiderable; that our Felicity depends neither upon their Eſteem nor Contempt; and to remember that the Scripture calls the Men of the World Fools, and that a time will come, when *Shame, Confuſion and Miſery*, ſhall fall to the Lot of thoſe Deſpiſers of Religion, while † *Glory, Honour and Peace ſhall be to every one that does good.*

2. We ſhall eaſily conquer this Shame if we conſider, that the Danger of incurring Mens Contempt or Hatred by doing our Duty, is not always ſo great as we may imagine. I confeſs Piety is often deſpiſed; but yet it

* Mark VIII. 38. † Rom. II. 10.

Part I. frequently commands Reſpect. Even thoſe who think it ſtrange that their Example ſhould not be followed, cannot help having a ſecret Eſteem and Veneration for good Men. When Zeal is accompanied with Meekneſs and Diſcretion, there is no fear that a Man ſhould make himſelf odious or ridiculous by practiſing Vertue. A Chriſtian Deportment, is ſo far from expoſing Men always to the Contempt of the World; that on the contrary it frequently happens, that thoſe who would avoid this Contempt, by neglecting their Duty, do thereby bring it upon themſelves.

3. There might be yet another Remedy againſt this vicious Shame; and that is the Example of Men of Authority. Whatever they approve or do, is reputed Honourable in the World; and on the other ſide, what they deſpiſe or neglect, is thought mean and diſgraceful. It would therefore be an eaſy thing to Them, to correct the Notions which Men commonly have of Religion. As ſoon as They ſhall love and honour it; other Men will no longer be aſhamed of it, but will place their Glory in practiſing it. This I am to inlarge upon in the Second Part of this Treatiſe.

CAUSE VI.

Cauſe VI.

CAUSE VI.

The Delaying of Repentance.

I Do not know whether any Illuſion is more Ordinary, or contributes more to the ſupport of Vice in the World, than that which I deſign to attack in this Chapter, and that is the Delaying Repentance. We muſt not believe that Men are ſo blind and ſo hardened, as never to think of their Salvation. There are few who have not a general Intention to obtain it. Even among thoſe who live ill, many are convinced, that Converſion is neceſſary, and that they are not yet in a State of Grace. If it be asked, Why then they do not Repent? I anſwer, That ſo unreaſonable a Proceeding, which ſeems ſo contradictory to it ſelf; ought to be imputed to the hope they entertain, of clearing all Scores one Day by Repentance; and of obtaining the Pardon of all their Sins, through the Divine Mercy. This is the true Cauſe of the greateſt part of thoſe Sins which are committed in the World. It is that deceitful Hope which fruſtrates all the endeavours that are uſed, to make Men forſake their vicious Habits. The delay of Converſion, ought therefore to be placed among the Cauſes of the bad Lives of

Part I. Christians; and the importance of this Subject, has made me resolve to bestow a particular Chapter upon it.

Now to handle this Matter right, we are to observe two different ways of putting off Conversion; for all Men do not delay it in the same manner, and the same Sentiments and Dispositions ought not to be supposed in them all. Some put it off to a remote time, and to the very end of their Lives. Others do not adjourn it so long; they design to go about it a good while before Death; at least they hope so; and they put it off to an undetermined time. The first, Sin properly in hopes of Pardon, but the others Sin in hopes of Repentance. The former deceive themselves more grosly, they think that in order to be Saved, it is enough to beg for Mercy, and to Repent tho' never so late; the Illusion of the others is more subtil, they conceive it is necessary to reform and to forsake Sin; but for all that they do not Convert themselves. Tho' these two ways of delaying have an affinity with one another, and might in a great measure be encountered with the same Arguments, yet I shall consider them here separately.

I. Men commonly entertain this Opinion, That if they do but Repent at the end of their Lives, their Sins will be no hindrance to their Salvation. They allot for this Repentance, the Approaches of Death, Old-age, or

or the time of Sickness; and they suppose that then, they shall fit themselves for a Christian Death, by confessing their Sins, and having recourse to the Divine Mercy. It is not, I think, needful to prove, that this Opinion is very common, for who can deny it? Neither will I go about to shew that it feeds Corruption and encourages Security, by proposing to Men such a method of Salvation, as leaves them at liberty to live still in Sin; for that is self evident. It is more important to let Men see how false and dangerous an Imagination that is, which makes them believe, that so they Repent before Death, they shall avoid Damnation and be Saved. In order to this, we must endeavour to discover the Principle they Act upon, and to unfold the true Sentiments of their Hearts. Cause VI.

The delay of Repentance includes Two different Motions; the one carries a Man towards Salvation, and the other towards Sin. On the one hand, Man is neither such an Enemy to himself, as to be altogether unconcerned about his Salvation, nor so blind as not to perceive that Repentance is necessary. On the other hand, he is so addicted to his Lusts, that he cannot resolve to renounce them. In this perplexity, Self-love finds him out an expedient by which he thinks to reconcile with his Appetites, the care of his Salvation. And that is, that if he sins, yet he intends to Repent.

Part I. But here it is manifeſt, that this Man puts a Cheat upon himſelf, and that ſuch Sentiments proceed only from Self-love, and from a ſtrong affection to Sin. Nothing elſe but the abſolute neceſſity of Dying, and of giving an Account to God obliges him to deſtin the end of his Life to Acts of Repentance. For it cannot be ſaid, that the Love of God and of Vertue has any ſhare in this Conduct. Is it any Love or Regard to God, that makes a Man deſire him in his laſt Extremity, and when he can enjoy the World no longer? This ſhews that a Man thinks of God only becauſe he expects Salvation at his Hands; which is to deal with him as with an Enemy, to whom we ſurrender our ſelves as late, and upon as good Terms as we can, and only that we may not periſh. Such a Delay includes a poſitive Reſolution to offend God, and to gratify one's Paſſions, at leaſt for the preſent. He that thinks to Repent hereafter, is not willing to Repent now. He allots the preſent time for the ſatisfying of his Luſts, and for the committing of thoſe Sins, which are to be the matter of his future Repentance. This is all that is fixed and certain in his Reſolution; for as to what he promiſes for the future it is moſt uncertain; and if we conſider the thing right, he promiſes nothing at all, for he does not know, whether he ſhall not die very ſoon, nor what he ſhall do, in caſe he lives ſometime longer.

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Cauſe VI.

The Hazard to which a Man expoſes himſelf by this Delay, is evident. In order to a compleat Repentance, Two Things are requiſite. The firſt is to have Time and Opportunity to Repent; The ſecond is, to make uſe of that Time and Opportunity. Thoſe who put off their Converſion to the laſt, muſt ſuppoſe that they ſhall have theſe two Advantages. But theſe things are extreamly uncertain, and no Man in the World can be ſure of them.

1. No Man can promiſe himſelf, that he ſhall have Time and Opportunity to Repent at the end of his Life. It is true in fact, that more than one Half of Mankind, die without having time to prepare for Death. If we reckon up all thoſe who are ſnatched away in an Inſtant by unforeſeen Accidents, or a ſudden Death, all thoſe who periſh in War, all thoſe who are ſeized with Diſtempers which take away their Senſes, all thoſe whom the Approaches of Death do not move to Repentance, becauſe they do not apprehend themſelves in any danger of dying: And if we add to theſe, thoſe whoſe only Preparation is to have a Miniſter to pray by their Bed-ſide, when they can hardly hear a few Words of what he ſays. It is certain, that all theſe together, make up above the Half of Mankind. Upon this I ask, even ſuppoſing that it were time enough for a Man to Repent when he ſees Death coming, Whether

Part I. it would not be Folly and Madneſs, for him to venture his Salvation upon the hope of repenting then?

It ſeems to many, that it is the way to drive Sinners into deſpair, to tell them they ought not to build the hope of Salvation, upon what they ſhall do in the Extremity of Life. But what I have ſaid juſt now proves evidently, that if Salvation did depend upon the manner of dying, Men muſt live in continual Fears, and in a kind of Deſperation; ſince their Salvation would depend upon a thing, which the half of Mankind cannot reckon upon. On the contrary nothing is more comfortable to Men, than to know that God grants them their whole Lives to work out their Salvation in; and that if they improve to that purpoſe the Leiſure and Conveniences they have, their Death will be happy, which way ſoever it may happen. But tho' what I have ſaid were not true, and tho' all might aſſure themſelves that they ſhall perceive the Approaches of Death, and have time to prepare for that laſt Paſſage; yet what certainty have they, that they ſhall make uſe of that Opportunity, and that their Converſion will not be moſt difficult, if not impoſſible? Converſion is not wrought, without God interpoſing, by thoſe Means which Grace uſes for that end. And can any Man flatter himſelf with the Hope, that theſe Means ſhall be offered him to the laſt, and that God in his juſt Anger

ger will not withdraw them from him? There is neither particular Revelation, nor general Promise, to give such Assurances to any Man living. So far from it, that God tells us many things in Scripture, which leave no ground for Hope, to those who abuse his Mercy. Cause VI.

But further, What can we imagine that God will do in favour of a hardned Sinner, at the time of Death? When God has made use of the Preaching of his Word; of Exhortations, Promises, Threatnings, inward Suggestions and Motions of his Grace; when God, I say, has used all these Means, for Twenty, Thirty, or Forty Years without any success: I cannot Apprehend, what Men expect that he should do more, at the Hour of Death. If it be said, that he can by a particular Dispensation, by sudden Inspirations, by a kind of Miracle, Convert a Sinner in his last Minutes; I will not dispute what God can do; but I will not scruple to say, that in the ordinary course of Grace, Conversion is not wrought by sudden and miraculous Inspirations: The Gospel speaks of nothing like that, and those who look for such Miracles, had best see, what they found their Hope upon.

It is certain besides, that Repentance is most difficult on Man's part, when he is at the point of Death. If a Man has lived in Ignorance and Vice, is he not in great danger of dying

Part I. dying Ignorant and Hardned? How will he perform Duties then, of which he has not ſo much as a Notion; Can a Man at that time change his ill Inclinations and ſhake off his vicious Habits of a ſudden, All thoſe who have applied themſelves to the Work of Converſion, know by experience, that the Conqueſt, I will not ſay of many, but of one ſingle Vice, has required both Time, and aſſiduous and conſtant care. Vicious Habits are not to be deſtroyed but by degrees, and good ones are acquired only by reiterated Acts. It is repugnant to Man's Nature, that this ſhould be done in an Inſtant. How can any one then reckon, that ſo conſiderable a Change, as that which true Converſion requires, will be effected in the ſhort time of a Sickneſs; And if this was poſſible, and through great Endeavours might be done, yet can any Man aſſure himſelf, that he ſhall have then all that Freedom and all that Strength of Mind and Body, which are neceſſary to ſet about this general Reformation; Is the time of Sickneſs wherein a Man is ſo much ſunk, and has the leaſt either of Leiſure or Strength, ſo very fit for a Buſineſs of this Importance? All that a Man can do then, is to betake himſelf to ſome confuſed and abrupt Devotions, the ordinary Refuge of thoſe Sinners, who have lived in a State of Obduration. But will that ſerve the turn? Are ſome haſty Reflections upon a Man's paſt Life, ſome Acts of Contrition,

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Cause VI.

some Prayers proceeding from trouble and agony, and extorted only by the fear of Death, some Sobs and Groans indistinctly breathed up to Heaven; are these, I say, sufficient to make amends for all that is past, to extirpate many inveterate Habits, and to secure to a Sinner an Eternity of Bliss;

I shall add two Considerations which are Convincing, and cannot be contested.

1. By growing in Years, Men lose the sense and remembrance of their Sins. Age and Custom produce this Effect. Excepting some extraordinary Sins which cannot be forgot, most Men do not remember their Faults. And how should they remember them, since for the most part they do not perceive when they commit them? We daily see Men who will Lye and Swear, and fly out into Passion almost every Minute; and yet do not reflect upon it; nay, they think themselves free from those Faults. This Error proceeds so far, that some very great Sinners, who are living in criminal Practices, fancy themselves Pious, and make no doubt, but that they are in the Favour of God. Now since the Custom of Sinning, does blind Men to such a degree; is it likely that after they have spent their Lives in this Security, they will effectually Repent at their Death? Can a Man Repent who does not know the Reasons why he should, who does not feel, or has forgot his Sins, and who thinks besides, that he is

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Part I. in a good State, and that he needs no Repentance.

2. If Repentance ſuppoſes the Knowledge of Sin, it ſuppoſes beſides a Hatred of it. But he who has loved Sin to the laſt, is leſs able then to hate, than he is to know his Sins. I cannot comprehend, how a Man who has loved the World all his Life, who has made it his only delight and ſtudy, to gratify his Luſts, and who has always been cold and indifferent towards Religion; ſhould when Death appears, ſuddenly change his Inclinations, hate what he loved, and love what till then he looked upon with indifference. So quick a paſſage from the Love, to the Hatred of Sin, is very rare. The ſorrow for Sin, and the Hatred of it, are always faint and weak in the beginnings of Repentance, even in thoſe who repent ſincerely. Converſion proceeds by degrees; a Man muſt have diſcontinued ſinning, and be already ſettled in the Habits of Virtue; before he can have a ſtrong averſion to Sin. And what kind of Repentance then can that be, which begins in the extremity of Life?

1. But here it is Objected firſt, that God is always ready to reſtore the greateſt Sinners to his Favour, when they have recourſe to his Mercy, and that there are expreſs Promiſes in the Goſpel, which aſſure us of this. I grant it: God never rejects a repenting Sinner. But before a Man can build upon this, the hope of being

being received into God's Favour at the Hour of Death, he muſt be ſure that he ſhall then ſincerely repent. Now I think I have demonſtrated, that this is what no Man can depend upon. As to the Promiſes which are made to Repentance in the Goſpel; I do not deny but that they may be applied in a good ſenſe to all Sinners; but yet it is certain, that they are made in favour of thoſe, whom God was to call to the Chriſtian Religion, and chiefly in favour of the Heathens. Chriſt and his Apoſtles were to aſſure all Men, that the Sins they had committed, ſhould not exclude them from the Covenant of Grace, provided they did ſincerely mourn for them, and part with them. When the Heathens came to Baptiſm, nothing elſe was required of them, but that they ſhould Repent, and make a ſolemn Vow of being holy for the time to come. But as to Chriſtians it cannot be ſaid, that God demands nothing of them but Repentance and Sorrow for Sins; for he calls them to Holineſs upon pain of Damnation. Cauſe VI.

In this ſenſe it was, that the Apoſtles Preached Repentance, and by this we may know, how much Chriſtianity is decayed. That Repentance, which conſiſts in the Confeſſion of Sins, and in a Reſolution to forſake them, is the Duty at which the Heathens began. This was the firſt thing which the Apoſtles required of them, it was preparatory to the Chriſtian Religion.

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Part I. St. *Paul* * places the Doctrine of Repentance, among the Fundamental Points, and the firſt Duties in which the *Catechumens* were inſtructed before Baptiſm. But now Chriſtians look upon Repentance, as the Duty with which they are to end their Lives; that is to ſay, they deſign to end, where the Heathens begun, and to enter Heaven at the ſame Gate, which admitted *Pagans* into the Church.

2. It will be ſaid further, That ſometimes Men, who have lived in Sin; die to all appearance, in very good Diſpoſitions. To this I reply; That we ſee a great many more of thoſe Perſons who die in a State of inſenſibility; and that by conſequence, a Sinner who puts off his Repentance, has more reaſon to fear, than to hope. For who has told him, that the Fate of theſe laſt, will not be his; and what ſurer Preſage can there be of ſo Tragical a Death, than the preſent hardneſs of his Heart? Beſides I do not know, whether it happens frequently, as the Objection ſeems to ſuppoſe, that Perſons who have lived ill, are well-diſpoſed when they die. If Repentance can be ſaving and effectual when it begins only upon a Death-bed, every body muſt own, that it ought to be very lively and deep, attended with demonſtrations of the moſt bitter Sorrow, and with all the Proofs that a dying man can give of the Sincerity of

* Heb. VI. 1.

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his Converſion. But we do not ſee many Inſtances of this Nature. There are but few great Sinners, who expreſs a lively Compunction at their Death, or a ſincere Deteſtation of their Sins, who have a due ſenſe of their Wickedneſs, and endeavour as much as they can to make Reparation for it, who practiſe Reſtitution, and edify all about them, by diſcharging the other Obligations of Conſcience. It is but ſeldom that we ſee ſuch Penitents. Cauſe VI.

Beſides, the Expreſſions of Devotion and Repentance, which are uſed by dying Men, are not always ſincere. It is much to be feared that their Repentance is nothing elſe but a certain Emotion, which the neceſſity of Dying, and the approaches of God's Judgment, muſt needs raiſe in the Mind of every Man, who has his Wits about him, and has ſome Ideas of Religion. Nothing is more deceitful, than the judging of a Man by what he either ſays, or does, when he is under the effects of Fear or Trouble. It is commonly ſaid of thoſe, who have given ſome ſigns of Piety upon their Death-beds, that they have made a very Chriſtian End : But there is often a great Miſtake in that Judgment. And to be ſatisfy'd of it, we need but obſerve what happens to ſome who have eſcaped Death, or ſome eminent Danger. While the Peril laſted, who could be more humble and holy than they? They

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Part I. ſhewed ſo much Devotion, and uttered ſuch Diſcourſes, that all the ſtanders by were edified by them; their Tears, their Prayers, their Proteſtations of Amendment, in a word, their whole Deportment, had in all appearance, ſo much of Chriſtian Zeal in it, that the Beholders were ſtruck with Admiration. But are there many of theſe, who when the Danger is over, continue in the ſame Diſpoſitions, remember their Promiſes, or alter any thing in their former courſe of Life? Almoſt all of them return to their old Habits as ſoon as the Calamity is paſt. Theſe are generally the Fruits of that Repentance which is excited by the fear of Death, in thoſe who recover: And what Effects then can it have in reſpect of thoſe that Die?

I confeſs, we ought not to condemn any Body; but I think we ſhould not pronounce a definitive Sentence, in favour of thoſe who have led an ill Life. For tho' Mens Judgment makes no alteration in the State of the Dead; yet it may have a very pernicious Effect upon the Living, who conclude from it, that a Man may die well, tho' he has lived ill. And while I am upon this Subject, I muſt ſay, that nothing contributes more to the keeping up of theſe dangerous Opinions, than when the Miniſters of Religion commend without Diſcretion, the Piety of the Dead. And yet this is freqently done, eſpecially in great Towns, and in the Courts of Princes. There

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There are to be found in thoſe Places, mean-ſpirited and unworthy Preachers, who proſtitute their Tongues and their Pens to the Praiſe of ſome Perſons, who had nothing of Chriſtianity in their Lives, and whoſe Condition ſhould rather make a Man tremble. But if ſome remnant of Shame reſtrains them from carrying their Flattery ſo far, as to commend the Lives of thoſe, whoſe Panegyrick they have undertaken; then they ſeek the Matter of their Praiſes, in ſome ſigns of Piety, which thoſe Perſons gave, before they left the World. Now I dare ſay, that the moſt Atheiſtical Diſcourſes, and the Corrupteſt Maxims of Libertines, are not by much ſo ſubtil a Poyſon, as ſuch kind of Elogies, delivered before Men who are ingaged in all the Diſorders of the Age, and then diſperſed through the World. Cauſe VI.

3. The Inſtance of the Converted Thief, who prayed to our Saviour upon the Croſs, and was received into Paradice, is ſeldom forgotten. But this Inſtance is generally very ill underſtood. Firſt, it is ſuppoſed, without any ground for it, that this Thief repented only upon the Croſs, and that his Converſion was the effect of a ſudden Inſpiration. But who can tell whether his Converſion was not begun, either before he was taken, or in the Priſon, where it is probable that he was kept for ſome time, before the Feaſt of Paſſover? But if his Converſion, muſt needs be

Part I. ſudden, and wrought only a few Minutes before his Death; if we muſt of neceſſity aſcribe it to a Miraculous Inſpiration and to thoſe ſingular Circumſtances which he then happen'd to be in; yet I do not ſee what can be inferr'd from this Inſtance; ſince no Man living can aſſure himſelf that any ſuch thing will befall him.

But be that as it will, we ſhould, I think, obſerve a vaſt difference between the State of this Thief, and that of a Chriſtian. This poor Wretch had not been called before, as Chriſtians are, he had never known our Saviour; or at leaſt he had not profeſs'd his Religion; he had not had that Illumination and thoſe Opportunities, which Grace offers every Day, to thoſe to whom the Goſpel is Preached. And ſo his Repentance tho' it came late, yet it might be as effectual to Salvation, as that of the Heathens, who embraced Chriſtianity in their riper Years, and who happen'd to die immediately after Baptiſm.

I ſhall ſay a word or two upon the Parable of the Labourers, where we read, *that thoſe who went to work in the Vineyard only an hour before Sun-ſet, received the ſame Wages, with thoſe who had been at work ever ſince the Morning. From this Sinners imagine it may be proved by an invincible Argument, that thoſe who Repent a little

* Matth. XX.

before

before Death, will obtain the ſame Reward with thoſe whoſe Life has been Regular. But this was not our Saviour's meaning in that Parable. It ſignifies only, that thoſe whom God ſhould Call laſt, and who ſhould anſwer his Call, were to be received into the Covenant, in the ſame manner as thoſe, who had been Called to it before, and that the Heathens ſhould ſhare in the ſame Priviledges with the *Jews*, tho' the *Jews* had been in Covenant with God, a great while before the Heathens. This our Saviour declares in theſe Words, which conclude the Parable; *ſo the laſt ſhall be firſt, and the firſt laſt.* Here is nothing that can be applied to thoſe Chriſtians, who delay their Converſion. They are not in the ſame Caſe with the Labourers, who were ſent but late into the Vineyard. Thoſe Labourers went no ſooner, *becauſe no Man had hired them*; but they went as ſoon as they were ſent. I ſay, Chriſtians are not in this Caſe, ſince they have been called in the Morning, and at all the Hours of the Day, being Born and having always lived in the Church. Cauſe VI.

I have been ſomewhat large in ſhewing how unreaſonable and dangerous the Proceeding of thoſe Men is, who pretend to Repent only at the end of their Lives. But all thoſe who put off their Converſion, do not put it off ſo far. There are many who acknowledge, that it is dangerous to ſtay till

Part I. the extremity, and that it is neceſſary to Repent betimes; they propoſe to go about it in a little time, and they hope that they ſhall Repent ſoon enough, not to be ſurprized by Death under a total hardning; but in the mean while they do nothing toward their Converſion.

This way of delaying, is an Illuſion, which does not appear ſo groſs and dangerous as the former, becauſe it ſuppoſes ſome Inclination to Good. But yet it is no better than an Artifice of the Heart, a Trick of Self-love, by which a Man deceives and blinds himſelf. Nay, in ſome reſpects, the State of theſe laſt, is more criminal and dangerous, than that of the firſt. It is more criminal, becauſe they do not what they approve of, and becauſe they ſin againſt the conſtant Admonitions of their Conſciences, and do not perform their Reſolutions and their Promiſes. But it is likewiſe more dangerous; for with this Intention to Repent in a little time, they think themſelves much better than thoſe who are reſolved to Repent only upon their Death-bed; they applaud themſelves for ſuch a ſenſe of Piety as they have; and they judge, that if they are not quite in a State of Salvation; at leaſt they are not far from it. Now one may eaſily ſee that ſuch an Opinion of themſelves, can only lay their Conſciences aſleep, and inſpire them with Preſumption and Security.

But

Cauſe VI.

But all things conſidered, they go no farther with theſe good Diſpoſitions, than thoſe, who without ſhuffling refer the whole matter to the end of their Lives. All the difference is, that the latter do all at once, what the others do ſucceſſively. And therefore all that has been ſaid in this Chapter, may almoſt be applied to theſe laſt. They run the ſame Risk with thoſe who deſign to Repent only upon extremity, ſince Death may ſurprize them before they have executed their good Reſolutions. They have as little Love for God, and are as much addicted to their Luſts: That which deceives them, is, that they fancy, that there is in them a ſincere Purpoſe of Converſion. But if this Intention is ſincere, how comes it to paſs that they do not Repent? When a Man is reſolved upon a thing, when his Heart is in it, when he deſires it in good earneſt, he goes about it without loſing time.

But when a Man uſes Delays, it is a ſign that he is not well reſolved yet: A Reſolution which no Effect follows, is not a fixed and ſettled Reſolution. This purpoſe of Converſion, is therefore but one of thoſe wavering Deſigns and Projects, which are formed every Day, but never accompliſhed. It is no more than a general and unactive Intention, which may perhaps be found in all Men. But other ſorts of purpoſes are neceſſary for a Man who hopes to be Saved. Salvation is not

Part I. obtain'd by bare Deſigns and Projects, but by the actual Practice of Holineſs.

Now Men might eaſily be undeceived, and Convince themſelves of the un-ſincerity of all thoſe Reſolutions they make in relation to Repentance; if they did but reflect upon the time paſt, and ask themſelves, Whether they have not been very near in the ſame Sentiments and Reſolutions for ſome Years together? And yet theſe Sentiments have produced nothing, and thoſe Reſolutions have made no Change in them; they are ſtill in the ſame State, and perhaps farther from Converſion than ever. Muſt not Men blinfold themſelves, when they do not ſee, that it will ſtill be the ſame thing for the future, and that Life will ſlip away in perpetual Delays; For what can they promiſe to themſelves from the time to come, and what ground have they to hope that it will not be like the time paſt? Are they more firmly reſolved than they were before? When will this Reſolution be put in Practice? Will it be in a Month, or in a Year? They muſt confeſs, they do not know when it will be. So that when they promiſe to Repent, they do not know what they promiſe; nay, they cannot tell whether they promiſe any thing. They will ſay perhaps, that they hope to confirm themſelves in a good Purpoſe; but what do they found this Hope upon? what do they wait for, and what new thing do they imagine will happen

to

to them? Have they any aſſurance that God will uſe for their Converſion, other Means and Motives than thoſe, which he has uſed already? Nay, how do they know but that they ſhall be deprived of thoſe Means and Helps which hitherto have been tender'd them? How can they tell whether there is a time to come for them, and whether their Life is not juſt ready to end? All this is very uncertain. But what is certainly true is this, that through ſo many Procraſtinations, their Hearts grow harder, and their return to Vertue becomes more difficult. The love of Sin increaſes by the Habit of ſinning, and the Means appointed to work Repentance, loſe ſomething of their force every Day. Cauſe VI.

Theſe Conſiderations do evidently ſhew, that the deferring of Converſion, is an Error as groſs as it is dangerous.

I think it will not be uſeleſs, to conclude this Chapter, with obſerving that the Reaſon why ſo many put off their Converſion, is, becauſe they look upon Repentance as an auſtere and melancholy Duty. And this Notion muſt needs put them upon deferring the Practice of it. It is therefore of the greateſt moment, to deſtroy that Prejudice; and to ſhew on the contrary, that if there is any ſad and deplorable Condition, it is that of a Man who lives in Sin. For that is either a State of Fear and Uncertainty, or of Security and Inſenſibility.

Part I. ſenſibility. Such a Man can have no ſolid Peace of Conſcience during his Life, and what Agitations muſt he fall into, when the thoughts of Death and of a Judgment to come happens to make ſome lively Impreſſion upon his Mind? For granting that then he may uſe ſome endeavours to diſpoſe himſelf to Repentance; yet beſides the danger of a late Repentance, it is a ſad thing to end one's Life in thoſe Struggles and Terrors, which muſt needs accompany ſuch a Repentance. A Man who delays his Converſion, prolongs his Miſery, and makes it greater and more incurable. But Joy and Tranquility are the portion of a pure Conſcience. There is no Felicity or Contentment, like that of a Soul which is freed from the bondage of Sin. Repentance is the beginning of that Happineſs, which grows ſweeter and more perfect, according to the progreſs we make in Virtue. Then it is that a Man is happy in all the Circumſtances of Life, beſides that he has the Comfort of being ſupported at the approaches of Death, with that Peace and Joy, which flow from a well-grounded Confidence in the Divine Mercy, from the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, and from a ſteady hope of Immortality.

CAUSE VII.

Mens Sloth and Negligence in Matters of Religion.

IT is natural and ordinary to Men, to be unconcerned about those things which they do not know, or of which they do not apprehend the Use and Necessity. And so we may easily conceive that Men living in Ignorance, and being possessed with those Notions I have now Confuted, must needs be very negligent and slothful, in what relates to Religion. But as this Sloth considered in it self, is a visible Cause of Corruption, so it will be fitting to take particular notice of it in this Chapter.

I suppose, in the first place, that it is impossible for a Man to attain the End which Religion proposes to him, without using the proper Means which lead to that End. In religious as well as in worldly Concerns, nothing is to be had without Labour and Care. As there are Means appointed for preserving the Life of the Body, so there are some ordained for maintaining the Life of the Soul; and the use of these last Means, is of the two the more necessary, because there is more care

and

Part I. and forecaſt requiſite in order to Salvation, about preſerving the Life of the Soul, than for ſupporting that of the Body. It is certain that the more excellent any thing is, the more it requires our Care; but beſides that we ſee the Life of the Body is eaſily preſerv'd; a Natural Inclination prompts us to thoſe things which are neceſſary for our Subſiſtence, and the means of ſupplying our bodily Wants, offer themſelves to us, as it were of their own accord. But it is not ſo with the ſpiritual Life. Conſidering our proneneſs to Evil, and the preſent State we are in, we cannot avoid being undone, if we neglect the neceſſary Care of our Souls, and if we follow all the Bents and Propenſions of our Nature. Religion obliges us upon many occaſions, to reſiſt our Inclinations and to offer violence to our ſelves, it requires Self-denial, Watchfulneſs and Labour; it lays many Duties upon us, and it preſcribes divers Means, without the uſe of which, we cannot but continue ſtill in Corruption and Death: I ſhall then but juſt name the Chiefeſt of thoſe Duties and Means.

Before all things, a Chriſtian ought to be Inſtructed, he ought to know with ſome exactneſs, both the Truths, and the Duties of Chriſtianity: Now this Knowledge cannot be acquired, without Hearing, Reading, Meditation, or ſome other Care of this Nature. In the next place, as Religion does not con-

consist in bare Knowledge, but chiefly in Practice; none of those Means should be neglected, which are proper to divert Men from Vice, and to spur them on to Vertue. These Means are very many, but they are all comprehended under these two principal Heads; The Exercises of Devotion, and the Circumspections which every Person ought to use. Cause VII.

The Exercises of Devotion are mighty Helps to Piety and Salvation; I mean such as Meditation, Reading, and Particularly Prayer, which is one of the most essential Acts of Religion, as well as one of the most efficacious Means to advance Holiness. There are on the other hand several Methods of Circumspection and Care, which are of absolute Necessity: As for instance, the foreseeing and shunning the occasions which may draw us into Sin; the seeking those Opportunities and Aids which promote Piety, the not being over-much concerned about the Body, the cherishing good Thoughts, and the resisting evil ones: But above all, it is a thing of the greatest Importance, that every one should endeavour thoroughly to know himself, which he cannot do, but by examining his present State, and by reflecting seriously and frequently upon his Actions and Words, and upon the Thoughts and Motions of his Heart. All these Cares are essential and necessary. For without the use of those Means, it is as impossible to be Religious and Pious, as it would

Part I. would be to live and ſubſiſt without Nouriſhment. A Man who will neither eat nor drink, muſt needs die in a little time. And ſo the Spiritual Life will ſoon be extinct, if the only Means which can ſupport it, are not uſed.

Let us now ſee, whether theſe Cares and Means which I have ſhewn to be neceſſary, are made uſe of. It is ſo viſible, that they are almoſt totally neglected, that I need not be very large upon the Proof of it.

Men take little care of being Inſtructed, and of getting Information and Knowledge about Religion. The far greater part either cannot Read, or never apply themſelves to any uſeful inſtructive Reading. Few hearken to the Inſtructions that are given them, and fewer yet examine or reflect upon them. Carnal Luſts and Secular Buſineſs; do ſo engroſs them, that they ſeldom or never give themſelves to ſearching the Truth. They generally have an Averſion to Spiritual Things. Hence it is, that in matters of Religion, they will rather believe implicitely what is told them, than be at the pains of enquiring, whether it is true or not. And they are every whit as careleſs about Exerciſes of Devotion. Many would think it a Puniſhment if they were made to Read or to Meditate. They never do thoſe things, but with reluctancy and as ſeldom as they can. They go about Prayer eſpecially with a ſtrange Indifference,

erence, and a criminal Indevotion. In short, very few take the necessary Care to preserve themselvs from Vice, and to behave themselves with Regularity and Caution; very few seek the Opportunities of doing Good, and avoiding the Temptations to which the common Condition of Men, or their own particularly Circumstances expose them: And the greatest Number are slaves to their Bodies, and wholly taken up with earthly things. One of the most sensible and fatal Effects of this Negligence, is that those Persons use no manner of endeavours to know themselves. It is very seldom if ever that they reflect upon what passes within them; upon their Thoughts, their Inclinations, the Motions of their Hearts, and the Principles they Act upon; or that they take a reveiw of their Words and Actions. They do not consider whether they have within them the Characters of good Men, or of wicked and hypocritical Persons. In a word, almost all of them live without Reflection. Cause VII.

Mens carelesness about Religion is therefore extreamly great. But they proceed otherwise in the things of the World, about which they are as Active and Laborious as they are Lazy and Cold in reference to true Piety. They will do every thing for their Bodies, and nothing for their Souls. They spare no Industry or Diligence, they omit nothing

Part I. nothing to promote their Temporal Concerns. If we were to judge by their Conduct, we would think that the Supreme Good is to be found in Earthly Advantages, and that Salvation is the leaſt important of all things.

I need not ſay what Effects ſuch a Negligence muſt produce. The greater part of Chriſtians being Ignorant in their Duty, having no Knowledge of themſelves, declining the uſe of thoſe Means which God has appointed, and without which he declares that no Man can be Saved; and wearing out their Lives in this Ignorance and Sloth, it is not to be imagined, that they can have any Religion or Piety; and ſo there muſt be a general Corruption amongſt them. I ſay, it muſt be ſo; unleſs God ſhould work Miracles, or rather change the Nature of Man, and invert the Order and the Laws which he has eſtabliſhed.

But becauſe it might be ſaid that Chriſtians do not live like Atheiſts, and that their Negligence is not ſo great as I repreſent it; Let us conſider a little, what ſort of Care they beſtow upon the Concerns of their Souls. Certainly there are ſome Perſons who are not guilty of this Negligence: But excepting theſe; what is it which the reſt of Mankind do, in order to their Salvation? Very little or nothing. They Pray, they aſſiſt ſometimes at Divine-Service, and at the publick Exer-

ciſes

ciſes of Religion; they hear Sermons, they receive the Sacrament, and they perform ſome other Duties of this Nature. This is all which the Religion of the greateſt part amounts to. But firſt theſe are not the only Duties which ought to be practis'd; there are others which are not leſs eſſential, and which yet are generally neglected; ſuch as Meditation, Reading, Self-examination; to ſay nothing here of the Duties of Sanctification. So that if ſome Acts of Religion are performed, others are quite omitted. The reaſon of this Proceeding may eaſily be diſcovered. There is a Law and a Cuſtom, which oblige all Perſons to ſome Acts of Religion; to Pray, to receive the Sacrament, and to go now and then to Church: If a Man ſhould intirely neglect thoſe external Duties, he would be thought an Atheiſt: But there is neither Cuſtom, nor Law, nor worldly Deceney, which obliges a Man to Meditate, to examine his own Conſcience, or to watch over his Conduct, and therefore theſe Duties being left to every one's Direction, are very little obſerved. Cauſe VII.

As to the other Duties which Chriſtians perform in ſome meaſure, the want of ſincerity in them, does moſt commonly turn them into ſo many Acts of Hypocriſy. They perhaps ſay ſome Prayers in the Morning; but this is done without Devotion, haſtily, with diſtraction, and wearineſs, and only to get rid

Part I. rid of it; after, they think no more of God all the Day, but are altogether buſied about the World and their Paſſions; and in the Evening they Pray with greater wandring of Thoughts than in the Morning. If it ſo fall out, that they go to Church, or hear a Sermon, they do not give a quarter of an Hours cloſe Attention to any thing that is ſaid, or done in the Publick Aſſemblies. In many Places the whole Devotion of the People, conſiſts in being preſent at ſome Sermons, which are as little Inſtructive, as they are minded or hearkned to. The uſe which is made of the Sacraments, eſpecially of the Euchariſt, converts them into vain Ceremonies, and makes them rather Obſtacles, than Helps to Salvation. As to the mortifying of the Body by reaſonable Abſtinence, Faſting and Retirement, it is an unknown Duty. The Indifference of Chriſtians is therefore but too palpable. What they do upon the account of Religion is very little; and yet they do that little ſo ill, that it is not much more beneficial to them, than if they did nothing at all.

And now what might not be ſaid, if after having thus ſhewn, that what Men do for their Salvation is next to nothing; I ſhould undertake to prove, that they do almoſt every thing that is neceſſary for their Damnation; and that they are zealous and induſtrious for their Ruin, as they are ſlothful and negligent in what is requiſite to preſerve them. There

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are means to Corrupt as well as to Sanctify our selves. The means of Corruption and Perdition, are Ignorance, want of Attention, neglect of Devotion, the love of the World, and of the Flesh, unruly Passions, Temptations, and ill Examples. Now supposing, that a Man was so monstrously Frantick, as to form the design of Damning himself; what would such a Man do? He would neglect the Exercises of Devotion, he would not Pray at all, or he would Pray only with his Lips; he would profane the Sacraments by an unsanctify'd use of them; he would only mind his Body and this present Life; he would give loose Reins to his Passions, as much as he might with decency and without danger; if he had an opportunity to gratify his Sensuality, his Covetousness, his Pride, or any other wicked Affection, he would gladly embrace it. This is what a Man would do to Damn himself: And is it not what a great many actually do? I confess, no Man is capable of so wild a Resolution, as to design to Damn himself; but a Man sufficiently Damns himself, when he takes no care of his Salvation, and when he does those things, which will infallible bring his Perdition after them. Cause VII.

The Sloth and Negligence of Men in the Concerns of their Souls, being one of the Causes of their Corruption, it would be highly necessary to remedy that Negligence, and to inspire them with Zeal for Religion; but

Part I. it is hard to ſucceed in this, Lazineſs is attended with a certain ſweetneſs to which Men give up themſelves with Pleaſure. The ſlothful do love and delight in Reſt; they cannot endure to be egged on to Labour. This is one of thoſe Habits which are moſt difficult to be conquered; and to ſay the Truth, there is but little hope of thoſe, in whom it is grown inveterate: It is a great Task to rouze them out of that ſluggiſh and lethargick Temper. God muſt interpoſe by a particular Grace, by great Afflictions, or by ſome other extraordinary Method.

But yet, I do not think it altogether impoſſible to overcome this ſinful and dangerous Sloth, or to preſerve thoſe from it, whom it has not ſeized as yet. Serious Reflections upon the importance of Salvation, and upon the Neceſſity of working at it, may produce that Effect. Men would not live in this Careleſneſs, but that either they do not apprehend of what Conſequence it is to be Saved; or that they imagine, there is not much to be done for the obtaining of Salvation. Theſe two Prejudices maintain their Lazineſs. Nothing can therefore be more uſeful, than to Convince them on the one hand, that nothing in the World is of greater Moment than Religion; and that Eternal Happineſs is the higheſt of all Concernments: And to let them ſee on the other hand, that this Felicity is not to be attained, but by aſ-

ſiduous

ſiduous Care, and an exact obſervation of the Duties of Chriſtianity. Cauſe VII.

I know it is difficult to make Men ſeriouſly enter upon theſe Reflections; but yet they ought ſtill to be laid before them, and we ſhould not give over. If they have no Effect at one time, there are Circumſtances in which they will prove ſucceſsful. I think, few would continue in this ſluggiſh Diſpoſition, if they did repreſent to themſelves what Notions and Thoughts they ſhall have at the end of their Lives, Every Man is ſatisfy'd that he muſt Die one Day, and that his Condition will then be the Happieſt that can be conceived, if he has made uſe of the Time and Opportunities he had to ſecure his Salvation; but that if he has neglected theſe Means, he ſhall find himſelf in ſtrange Agonies, and be reduc'd to diſmal Extremities. When Death appears, when the World vaniſhes, a Man is then wholly taken up with Religion, he would give then all the World, if it was in his Poſſeſſion, to ſecure to himſelf a better Life. Now ſince we all know that this muſt one Day be our Caſe, Wiſdom requires, that we ſhould overcome betimes that Negligence, of which the Conſequences will be ſo fatal; and that we ſhould apply our ſelves with earneſtneſs and pleaſure to that Work, upon which our Sovereign Felicity depends.

CAUSE VIII.

Worldly Buſineſs.

NEgligence commonly proceeds, either from Indifference, or from Diſtraction. We neglect thoſe things, which we look upon with indifference; but we frequently alſo neglect things of Moment, becauſe we are diſtracted by other Cares. Theſe are the two Cauſes of Mens Careleſneſs in Matters of Religion. On the one hand, Piety is Indifferent to them, they neither know the Nature nor the Excellency of it; the Duties which it preſcribes, do not appear very pleaſant or neceſſary to them; they love and eſteem only the Things of the World, all this I have proved, in the fore-going Chapters. On the other hand, they are diſtracted by Temporal Cares, which rob them of the leiſure and freedom, that are neceſſary for the Study and Practice of Religion. Worldly Buſineſs therefore is another Source of Corruption, as I hope to prove it by the following Conſiderations.

I reckon among Worldly Employments, all thoſe Cares which relate to the World, or this preſent Life, whether they take up the Body or the Mind. There are Temporal Cares which properly take up the Body; ſuch are the

the Cares of Mechanicks, or Husband-men; and there are other Secular Cares, which chiefly employ the Mind, Such is the Study of Humane Learning, of Politicks, or Philoſophy. Theſe laſt as well as the firſt, ought to be counted Worldly Buſineſs. Nay, we may obſerve that difference between theſe two ſorts of Temporal Employments; that the Cares which take up the Mind are ſometimes the more dangerous. While the Body is at Work, the Mind may be at liberty; but when the Mind is employed, when the Heart is diſtracted and poſſeſſed with Temporal Cares, it is much harder for the Thoughts of Religion to enter, or to make any Impreſſion upon a Man. Cauſe VIII.

But whether theſe Employments relate to the Mind or to the Body, we ought not to think, that they are of themſelves hindrances to Piety. For this Imagination, would be a very groſs Error. Worldly Buſineſs is Lawful and Neceſſary, and it were a Sin to neglect it, ſince that would be contrary to the Order which God has eſtabliſhed in the World. Nay, it may be uſeful to our Salvation, it may divert ill Thoughts, it may take off Men from triffling and vicious Employments, and it may ſerve to mortify the Body, and to baniſh Idleneſs, which is the Cauſe of all manner of Vice.

I make this Remark, becauſe ſome People fancy, that in order to be Saved, it muſt be

Part I. neceſſary to live in an abſolute Retirement, to lay aſide all Temporal Cares, and to give up our ſelves wholly to Spiritual Exerciſes, to Reading, Contemplation, Meditation and Prayer. But thoſe who do thus ſtretch the Obligation of renouncing the World, and inſiſt ſo much upon a Retired and Comtemplative Life, do not I doubt, very well underſtand the nature of Piety, nor do any great Service to it. Sometimes by endeavouring to Spiritualize Men too much, we ſpoil all, and we make Piety appear ridiculous or impracticable. We ſhould always remember that Piety is made for Man. Now it is not One in Fifty that can thus embrace Retirement, and abſolutely renounce the World. I am far from condemning Retirement; it is ſometimes very ſeaſonable, and I think it in ſome ſenſe neceſſary to all Men. There are ſome Perſons who for the ſake of their Salvation, or the Edification of the Church, ought to chuſe a Retired Life, diſingaged from Temporal Cares. Others are called to that kind of Life by the Circumſtances which Providence has placed them in. And beſides, there is no Chriſtian, but ought to allow himſelf ſome times of Retirement; nay, there are ſome Temporal Employments which do not hinder a Man to live in a Retired manner. But after all, it would be the Ruin of Society, and of moſt Chriſtian Vertues, if every one ſhould live a-part, and buſy himſelf only in Spiritual Exerciſes. God does

does not require this; He has Created Man to labour in the World, and thoſe who follow an honeſt Employment in it, act ſuitably to his Will, and their Buſineſs may prove a Help to their Salvation. Cauſe VIII.

I need not I think, advertiſe the Reader that I ſpeak here only of lawful Employments, and not of thoſe which are bad and contrary to the Laws of Nature or Religion. And yet theſe laſt are very common; but becauſe every body may eaſily ſee that ſuch Occupations muſt unavoidably engage Men into Sin, I will make it my chief Buſineſs to ſhew, that Lawful and Innocent Employments, prove to many Perſons, a hindrance to Piety and Salvation.

Temporal Employments then being not bad in themſelves, they cannot occaſion Corruption but by the Abuſe that is made of them. Now there are Four Faults which Men commit in this Matter.

1. The firſt is, when they are intirely taken up with Worldly Things. We have ſhewed already, that Men live in a prodigious Sloth and Careleſneſs about Religion, and that they do almoſt nothing for their Souls and their Salvation. From this it follows, that they muſt be employ'd only about their Bodies and the Concerns of this Life. And in fact, if we inquire into their Cares, we ſhall find that they terminate in the World, and in their Temporal Intereſt, and this I think, needs not be proved.

Part I. 2. Their Hearts ſink too deep into the things of the World. The Buſineſs of Life is innocent when it is follow'd with moderation; but it diverts Men from Piety, when it is purſued more, and with greater eagerneſs than it deſerves. That exceſſive love of the World, makes the unhappineſs of Men. Inſtead of eſteeming Temporal Goods in proportion to their worth, and as remembring that they are not able to procure them true Felicity; inſtead of conſidering that they are not made for this Life only, and that they cannot long enjoy thoſe advantages which they court; they give up themſelves wholly to the World, they ſet their Hearts and Affections upon it, and they act as if this Life was the ultimate end of all their Actions. They labour only for their Bodies, and for the gratifying of their Appetites. This is the Mark aimed at in all their Thoughts and Projects: This is what inflames their Deſires, and what excites in them the moſt violent Paſſions of Grief or Joy, of Anxiety or Impatience. They are far from having ſuch a hearty concern for Religion and Piety. In relation to this, their Affections are faint and languid, and they do nothing but with Indifference, or by conſtraint.

3. The Third Fault is when Men are too much employ'd, and when they over-load themſelves with Buſineſs. It is a great piece of Wiſdom, both in reſpect of the Tranquili-

ty

ty of this Life, and the concerns of another, to avoid the excess and the hurry of Business, as much as possibly we may, without being wanting to the Duties of our Calling; to confine our selves to necessary Cares, and to wave all superfluous ones. Men would live happy if they did but know, what their Profession requires of them, and limit themselves to it, without meddling in that which does not concern them. But here they observe no bounds. they will fly at all, they will busy themselves about many things, which do not belong to their Province. This without doubt is a dangerous Disease, and the occasion of several Disorders. Cause VIII.

4. In the last place, there is one thing more to blame, and that is when worldly Business, becomes an occasion of Sin, by the abuse that is made of it. For besides that it is a very ill Disposition in a Christian to be fond of the World; most Men are so unhappy as to direct all the Business of Life to a bad End, which is to satisfy and to enflame the more their irregular Appetites. And by this means, many Enterprizes and particular Actions of theirs, which in themselves are innocent, become evil and unlawful, and engage them in all manner of Sins.

These Considerations prove already, that the greatest part of Mens Vices proceeds from their Temporal Affairs; but this will appear yet more clearly by the following Reflections.

1. This

Part I.

1. This exceſſive Application to Temporal Concerns, engroſſes almoſt our whole Time, ſo that it does not leave us a ſufficient ſhare of it, to be ſpent in Cares of another Nature. Men confeſs this themſelves, and plead it for an Excuſe. They alledge their Buſineſs. A Man who is engaged in the World will ſay, *I have no time to Read, or to perform the Exerciſes of Religion*; *I have too much Buſineſs, my Employ or my Calling does not leave me a minute of leiſure.* And the Truth is, they are too buſy for the moſt part. If they have any ſpare time, ſome Hours or ſome Days of reſt, wherein the courſe of their ordinary Employments is interrupted; they are not in a condition, to improve to the beſt Advantage thoſe ſhort Intervals of Relaxation.

2. And truly, Secular Buſineſs does not only take away the beſt part of Mens Time, but it does beſides diſtract their Minds and invade their Hearts and Affections. When for a whole Day or Week the Mind and Body have been in agitation, a Man is weary and ſpent, the activity of his Thoughts is exhauſted, his Head is too full to be clear, he is not able to drive away in an inſtant ſo many worldly Ideas, to calm his Paſſions, and to turn himſelf of the ſudden, to Spiritual Exerciſes. So that he muſt either abſolutely neglect the Duties of Piety, or perform them very ill. When a Man has brought himſelf to a Habit, of being employed only in Worldly Affairs, he is

no

o longer Maſter of his own Thoughts and Cauſe
lotions. It is with great difficulty, if he VIII.
n at all apply himſelf to Objects that are
reign to him. Thoſe Objects affect him but
eakly; he muſt make great Efforts, before
e can faſten upon them; and if he fixes there
or a few moments, it is a violent ſtate
which he cannot continue long. Thoſe
houghts, of which he is conſtantly full,
owd in upon him, and he returns immedi-
ely to theſe Things which he loves, and
hich commonly take him up.

This is the true reaſon, why Men love and
eliſh Spiritual Things ſo little, and why they
ink it ſo hard to ſubdue their Minds with
eading, Attention, and Meditation. This
particularly the main Source of Indevotion
the Exerciſes of Piety. Why is the Mind
apt to wander in Prayer? The too great
pplication to Temporal Affairs is the Cauſe
f it. As ſoon as a Man is awake in the Morn-
g, a throng of Thoughts and a Multiplici-
of Deſigns and Buſineſs break in upon his
ind, and take poſſeſſion of his Heart; he is
iled with theſe Things all the Day, he fol-
ows and plods upon them without Diſtracti-
n or Interruption. And how is it to be ima-
ined that amidſt all this hurry and turmoil,
e ſhould find that Recollection, that Tran-
uility, and that Elevation, without which
he Exerciſes of Piety are but meer Hypocriſy?
Whence comes it to paſs that Men bring ſo

little

Part I. little Attention and Sincerity with them, to the publick Worſhip of God? Why do Sermons produce ſo little fruit? Why do the moſt certain and important Truths of Religion, the cleareſt and the moſt ſolid Reaſonings, make either no Impreſſion at all, or at leaſt no laſting one upon the Hearers? What is the reaſon why in the moſt ſolemn Devotions, and particularly in the Holy Communion, it is ſo difficult for Men to lift up their Hearts to God, and to ſhake off a thouſand idle or ſinful Thoughts, which come then to amuſe and diſtract them? And laſtly, Why do thoſe Vows and Promiſes which are made even with ſome ſincerity, prove ſo ineffectual? Why do the beſt Reſolutions vaniſh ſo eaſily and ſo ſoon? All this comes from Mens being too much taken up with Temporal Cares.

3. Theſe exceſſive Cares do not only diſtract the Mind, but they do beſides directly obſtruct Sanctification, and lead Men into Sin. For firſt it is impoſſible to love Religion and Vertue, when the Heart is ſet upon the World. Our Saviour tells us, * *That no Man can ſerve two Maſters*; and St. *John* declares, † *That the Love of God is not in thoſe who love the World.* There is ſuch an Oppoſition between Bodily and Spiritual Exerciſes, that thoſe who give themſelves up to the firſt, are incapable of the others. Worldly Occupations render Men

* Matth. VI. 24. † 1 John II. 15.

Carnal

Carnal, Sensual and Dull; they keep up Ig- Cause
norance and foment Sloth, and they weigh VIII.
down all their Inclinations and Thoughts, to
the Earth, so that they must be Careless and
indifferent, about Spiritual Objects and Hea-
venly Concerns. And indeed they are very
ill dispos'd to value those Good Things as they
deserve; or to seek them with that Eagerness
and Sincerity which they ought. Can we
think that Men, who propose nothing else to
themselves, but the amassing of Wealth, the
making their Court, or the Canvassing for
Places; and who live and toil only for such
things, should have a due sense of the Con-
cerns of their Salvation? It is hard to ima-
gine it.

But further, Religion does not allow Chri-
stians to love the World, or to cleave to it.
It requires, that *they should possess Temporal*
Goods as not possessing them, and that, *they*
should use the World, as not abusing it; because
on the one hand, *the Figure of the World passes*
away, and it would be a Folly to fix their
Hearts upon vain and transitory Enjoyments:
and on the other hand, they ought to aspire
chiefly to the possession of solid and eternal
Happiness. To be therefore taken up only
with earthly Things, and to let them enter too
deep into one's Heart, is a Disposition quite con-
trary to that, which a Christian ought to be in.

* 1 Cor. VII. 31.

4. Lastly,

Part I. 4. Lastly, An excessive Application to Temporal Affairs hurries a Man into many Disorders. We need but reflect a little, to be satisfied that a Man who is filled only, with the Thoughts and Solicitudes of this Life, must be a Slave to his Senses and Passions; and that he lays himself open every Moment to a Thousand Temptations, which he is not able to withstand. Tho' his Employments are Lawful in themselves, yet he makes them criminal, because to him they are only Means of gratifying his Appetites. And the greatest Mischief is, that when a Man is once entred upon that Course, he still confirms himself in it, so that at last he cannot leave it off. On the one hand, his Passions are still mounting higher; on the other, Business and Toil grow upon him. He first proposes an End to himself, and then he will bring it about at any rate, as being engaged in Honour and by Interest not to desist. If he meets with Obstacles he will do any thing to surmount them. If he succeeds, Success animates him with new Ardour; he is for going further: In a word, it is an endless labour, a continual Succession of Cares, which are still growing greater, and which end only with his Life.

From all this we may conclude, that the abuse of worldly Business is most dangerous, and that if we would not have it obstruct our Salvation, we ought to observe these three Rules.

The

The First is, That we should pursue the Things of this World with Moderation. One of the most useful Directions for a happy Life, is this; To lay nothing too much to Heart. The way to preserve our Innocence and Tranquility, is to crave nothing too eagerly: not to rejoyce excessively at any Prosperity, not to be dejected above measure for any Disasters which may happen, and not to be too hot and peremptory upon any Design. The Second Caution to be used, is the avoiding multiplicity of Business, and excess of Imployments, as much as is consistent with the Duties of our Calling. Every one should consider what he is fit for, and what he is Called to, and go no farther. In the Last Place, Wisdom requires, that among all the Affairs of this Life, we should reserve the necessary Time and Care, to pay what we owe to God, and to mind our Salvation, the most important of all Concerns. To this end, it is very useful, to have certain Times of Retirement and Leisure, and to accustom our selves to make now and then even in the midst of temporal Employments, such Reflections as may call us back to our Duty, and be like a Counterpoise to that Byas which carries us toward sensible Objects. Let us often think that we are mortal, that we have a Soul, and that there is another Life after this. Let us consider what all our worldly Cares terminate in, and

Cause VIII.

Part I. and what Judgment we ſhall make of them upon our Death-Beds. Theſe Reflections will put us upon wiſe and moderate Courſes, and ſo we ſhall avoid innumerable Diſorders and Miſeries which Men fall into, by their too great application to Temporal Buſineſs.

CAUSE

Cauſe IX.

CAUSE IX.

Mens Particular Callings.

THo' we have ſeen already that Corruption has its Source in the Abuſe of Worldly Buſineſs, yet it may be proper to inſiſt a little more upon this Matter, and to Conſider it with relation to the different States and Callings which Men are ingaged in. When we ſpeak of worldly Buſineſs, we mean chiefly thoſe Things, about which the greateſt part of Life is ſpent. Now thoſe Occupations muſt needs be ſuitable to the particular kind of Life which a Man follows. And ſo every Man's kind of Life, may be a Source, or at leaſt an accidental Cauſe of Corruption.

As the World is Conſtituted, it is neceſſary that there ſhould be different Profeſſions among Men, that ſome ſhould Cultivate the Earth, that others ſhould apply themſelves to Arts and Trades, and that others ſhould exerciſe Magiſtracy or Traffick. The difference of Sex, Age, Condition, and other Circumſtances, creates a great variety in relation to particular Callings. Now this diverſity of Employs and Conditions, is innocent in it ſelf; the World ſubſiſts, and Society is preſerv'd by it. But yet it cannot be denied,

Part I. but that a great part of the Diſorders, which happen in the World, proceeds from the kind of Life which Men chuſe, and from the particular State they are in; and that becauſe they abuſe it, and do not demean themſelves in it, with Caution and Prudence. The Proof of this ſhall conclude the Firſt Part of this Treatiſe.

But here we are to uſe ſome diſtinction. There are Callings which are bad in themſelves, and others which are Lawful and Innocent; they are not all therefore equally dangerous, and ſome produce Corruption, more neceſſarily than others.

All Profeſſions, or Callings are not Lawful, ſome are Unlawful and Criminal. The World is full of People, who make Sin it ſelf their Ordinary Calling and Profeſſion. There are infinite Numbers, who inſtead of following an honeſt Employment, ſubſiſt only by the Sins which they commit themſelves, or which they make others commit. This might eaſily be proved by abundance of Inſtances. How many are there, whoſe Trade is a conſtant Practice of Obſcenity, Lewdneſs and Debauchery, of Artifice and Intrigue, Lying and Knavery? How many are there, who are profeſſed Extortioners and Cheats, who are always employed in Acts of Injuſtice, Cruelty and Violence? nay, there are Societies Form'd for that purpoſe; the Trade of Robbing, of Puniſhing the Innocent, and that by committing

ting Rapine by Sea and Land, is erected into an honourable and lawful Employment. Many Perſons are ſuffered at this Day among Chriſtians, whoſe Profeſſion was formerly counted Infamous: Many are tolerated, who are only Miniſters of Voluptiouſneſs, and whoſe only Buſineſs it is to introduce Licentiouſneſs of Manners, to corrupt the Youth by training them up to the love of Pleaſure; and to a Luxurious and Effeminate Life; and to furniſh thoſe who are inclined to Debauchery, Senſuality, Idleneſs, or Gaming; with the Means to gratify their Inclinations. Now all theſe Profeſſions are not only inſeparable from Sin, but they likewiſe make way for all kinds of Vice among Chriſtians. Cauſe IX.

We ought to paſs almoſt the ſame Judgment upon the way of Living of thoſe, who without making a publick Profeſſion of Vice, propoſe no other end to themſelves in this World, but the pleaſing of their Appetites. Some have no other View, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Life, and they level their whole Conduct at that Mark. Others deſiring to grow Rich, or to raiſe themſelves to Honours, make no ſcruple of uſing all the Means, which Intereſt, Ambition and Injuſtice, have eſtabliſhed in the World. They make uſe of Fraud, Violence and Oppreſſion; it is their Maxim and their Study to diſſemble their Sentiments, and to do miſchief to thoſe who ſtand in their way. In a word, they betake

Part I. themſelves to every thing that may further the ſucceſs of their Deſigns. Such a method of Life, is manifeſtly contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, and it muſt needs be highly ſinful, ſince both the End of it, and the Means uſed to obtain that End, are ſo.

There are other kinds of Life, which do not ſeem altogether ſo bad, and yet are not much better. This may particularly be ſaid of Idleneſs. The Profeſſion of many, is to have none at all, and to be as little Employ'd as they can. They think it the happieſt of all Conditions to have nothing to do, and to live at Reſt and free from Action. But yet it is unworthy of a Man, and much more of a Chriſtian, to be uſeleſs in the World. And if this Idleneſs is ſhameful and culpable in it ſelf, it is much more ſo in its Effects and Conſequences. It betrays Men into frivolous or dangerous Paſtimes. For a Man cannot be perfectly Idle. The want of uſeful Buſineſs muſt be ſupplied with Amuſements; and thoſe Amuſements are generally ſinful. Thus we ſee Multitudes of People, who excepting the time which they muſt needs beſtow upon the Neceſſities of Nature, and upon ſome external and indiſpenſable Acts of Religion, conſume the beſt part of their Lives at Play, or in Diverſions, in unprofitable Reading and Converſations, in meeting Companies, in receiving or returning Viſits, or in other ſuch things, which tho' they are thought innocent,

yet

yet they enervate the Mind, they devour Time, they enſlave a Man to the Opinions and Modes of the World, and they make him moſt frequently tranſgreſs the Laws of Religion. It would not be difficult to apply this to *profeſſed* Gameſters, to thoſe who ſpend their time in triffling Diſcourſes and impertinent Viſits, and to many other Perſons. I might eaſily ſhew, if it was neceſſary, that ſuch a Life has little of Chriſtianity in it, and that it is a great deal more to blame, than is commonly believed. Cauſe IX.

Thus Men follow divers kinds of Life, which are eſſentially Bad, and wherein by Conſequence, Purity of Heart, and Innocency of Life, cannot be preſerv'd.

As to thoſe kinds of Life and Occupations which are Lawful, I might obſerve in the firſt place, that for the moſt part Men are too much wedded to them. and that they commonly abuſe them. But I will not preſs this Conſideration, having ſhewn already in the foregoing Chapter, that too great application to Temporal Affairs, robs Men both of the Time, and of that Inclination and Freedom which are neceſſary to mind Spiritual Things, and that it makes them Dull, Earthly-minded, Senſual and Slaves to their Paſſions. To ſpeak then only of what concerns particular Callings, I ſhall obſerve theſe Two general Faults.

Part I. 1. It is a great Miſchief that Men embrace Profeſſions which are not fit for them. Every Profeſſion require ſome particular Qualifications and Talents; and ſince all Men have not thoſe Qualifications, it follows that all Men are not fit for all Employments, and that Diſtinction and Choiſe are to be us'd in pitching upon a Profeſſion. The Welfare of Societies and of particular Perſons, does in a great meaſure depend upon that Choiſe. If no Care is taken of this, Employments muſt be ill diſcharged, and from thence a great many Diſorders will ariſe both in Church and State.

Now if we take a Survey of the different Callings which Men are ingaged in, we will find that they are often deſtitute of thoſe Qualifications which are neceſſary for the right diſcharging of them. And the worſt of it is that this happens in the moſt conſiderable Employments, and in thoſe which might contribute moſt to the preſerving of Order, and the encouraging of Vertue in the World. As to Profeſſions of leſſer Importance, the Choiſe is much eaſier; every body almoſt is capable of them, and the Faults which may be committed there are not of great Conſequence. If a Husband-man does not well underſtand his Buſineſs, or a Mechanick his Trade, no great inconveniency will enſue from thence in relation to Society. But when publick Employments are in the Hands of Men who are not qualified for them, it is hard to tell how much

Miſchief

Miſchief is occaſioned by it. Is it not for inſtance a lamentable thing, that ſo many Perſons ſhould dedicate themſelves to the Church, who want the Talents requiſite for ſo high a Function; and that ſo many who might do great Service in that Profeſſion do not embrace it? By this it happens that ſome of thoſe who are placed at the Helm in ſeveral Churches, want both Learning and Probity, and that Religion is very ill adminiſtred, ſo that the People being without Inſtruction or Conduct, live in Ignorance and Diſorder. The ſame may be ſaid of the Office of Magiſtrates, when it is entruſted to thoſe who are not proper for it. Cauſe IX.

2. Lawful Callings may prove great Occaſions of Corruption and Diſorder, both in reſpect of thoſe who embrace them, and of the Publick, when they are ill exerciſed, when the Duties annexed to them are neglected; when Men do not watch againſt the Temptations which are particular to them, and when they look upon them only as means to gratify their Inclinations, to get Money, to have a Rank, to gain Credit, or to humour ſome other Paſſion. I might enter here upon many particulars, but becauſe this would lead me too far, I ſhall confine my ſelf to a few Inſtances.

It would be very proper to ſpeak here of the Profeſſion of Church-men, and of the Office of Princes, Magiſtrates and Judges, and to ſhew how pernicious both theſe kinds of Life prove often, not only to thoſe who are

Part I. raiſed to them, but likewiſe to Church and State. But theſe Two Articles are of too great Moment, to be touched upon only by the by. They are Two General Cauſes of Corruption, which deſerve to be purpoſely handled, and which are to have a Place in the Second Part of this Book.

The Profeſſion of Military Men, is a kind of Life which corrupts vaſt Multitudes. I do not condemn the Profeſſion in general. It is Lawful, a Man may live in it like a Chriſtian, and there are Perſons in Military Employments, of a ſolid Vertue and an exemplary Piety. But it muſt be confeſs'd, that the Number of thoſe Perſons is not great; and that for the generality, the Maxims and Deportment of the Men of that Profeſſion, agree very little with the Rules of Chriſtianity. Thoſe who follow the Employments of War, are for the moſt part Men of looſe and vicious Principles. Every body knows, that if on the one hand ſome good Men are found to embrace this Profeſſion, on the other hand it is the ordinary Receptacle, and the laſt Shift, of Idle and Debauched People; and of thoſe who are over-whelmed with Poverty and Miſery. Beſides, how do Men live in that Profeſſion? ſaving ſome few Diſorders which Military Diſcipline does not allow of, every thing is lawful there; I ſpeak of what is commonly obſerved. To ſpend their Life in Idleneſs and Gaming, is the leaſt Fault of Soldiers.

Soldiers. Lewdneſs is a thing about which no great Scruple is made among them. The ſame might almoſt be ſaid of Injuſtce; it is well known that commonly Officers do not thrive but the Soldiers pay for it. I ſay nothing of unjuſt Wars, nor of the Cruelty and Inhumanity which often attend that kind of Life, becauſe I will not enlarge upon this Subject. But it is moſt certain, and every conſidering Perſon will own, that after the rate that Military Men live almoſt every where; War is the School of Vice, and that the prodigious Number of thoſe, who follow that Employment, is one of the principal Cauſes of Corruption and Debauchery. Cauſe IX.

Commerce is one of the moſt Lawful and Neceſſary Profeſſions of Life. Not only Society, but Religion it ſelf may reap great Advantages from it. But yet this Calling has its Dangers and Temptations, and it is exerciſed by many in a way which is contrary to good Conſcience. As the only End of Traffick is Gain, and as the Opportunities of getting by unlawful Methods, which may be practiſed with impunity, offer themſelves every Day; ſo it is evident, that if a Merchant has not a ſtrict and well-informed Conſcience, and Vertue enough to reſiſt the perpetual Temptations to which his Calling expoſes him, he will forfeit his Innocence, and violate every Minute the Rules of Juſtice and Equity, of Charity, Truth and Honeſty.

There

Part I. There are few Callings more innocent and more ſuitable to the Order which God did eſtabliſh at firſt, than the Employments of thoſe who exerciſe Mechanick Trades, and get their Livelihood by bodily Labour. And yet this kind of Life proves to a great many an Occaſion to Vice, becauſe they do not arm themſelves againſt the Temptations and Sins which are ordinary in thoſe Callings. It is almoſt the general Character of this Order of Men, to mind nothing but the World, to labour only for their Bodies, and to do nothing for their Souls. Hence it is, that they are Ignorant, that they know their Religion very little, that they are groſs, ſenſual, given to Intemperance, and ſeveral other Exceſſes. They are apt beſides, to be unjuſt and falſe. They make no Conſcience of doing their work ill, of Lying, and detaining what is not theirs. There is a Thouſand petty Frauds and little knaviſh Tricks, uſed in every Trade, which are thought Innocent and Lawful ways of Gain. Now it is plain, that all this does not contribute a little towards Corruption.

What I have ſaid of the Employments of Life, may be applied to the different States Men are in, with relation to Age, Condition, and their way of Living. All theſe are ſo many occaſions and circumſtances, which may divert them from their Duty.

Thus Youth has its particular Temptations. Young People are Vain, Preſumptious, Senſual,

ſual, given to Pleaſure, violent and bold in their Paſſions. They are likewiſe Imprudent and Fickle, becauſe they want Knowledge and Experience. Being thus diſpoſed at that Age, they will almoſt infallibly, unleſs prevented by a good Education, Corrupt themſelves, and contract ill Habits, which will ſtick by them, as long as they live. Daily Experience ſhews us, that Youth ill ſpent is the Source of the Corruption of a great many for the reſt of their whole Life. Cauſe IX.

Old People are commonly Covetous, Moroſe, Suſpicious, wedded to the Opinions they have once embraced, and moſt deeply engaged in their vicious Cuſtoms. Their Paſſions are not ſo boiſterous, but they are more laſting and harder to be cured, than thoſe of Young People. And from this we may judge, that if Reaſon and Religion do not correct thoſe Faults of Old People; that Age, which ought chiefly to be employed in preparing for Death, will prove an Obſtacle to Piety and Salvation.

The Rich as St. *Paul* obſerves *, are proud and high-minded; they are apt beſides to be ſlothful, they love to ſatisfie their Paſſions, are full of Self-love, minding themſelves in every thing, and being little affected with the Miſeries of others. So that Riches may eaſily ſpoil thoſe who poſſeſs them, and do actually ſpoil many.

* 1 Tim. VI. 17.

The

Part I. The Poor are almoſt all of them Vicious, becauſe they are Ignorant, forſaken from their Infancy, and grown up in Want and Idleneſs, and among bad Company. They have little Religion, they will live without Working, they are given to Stealing and Diſhoneſty. Envy fills their Hearts, and they only keep within the bounds of Duty, when they can do no miſchief.

Thoſe who live un-confined and much in the World, have for the moſt part little of a Chriſtian Character. They lie open to abundance of Temptations, and what is moſt dangerous in that kind of Life, is, that a Man has no ſooner embraced it, but he thinks it honourable, lawful and neceſſary; he hearkens no longer to the Rules of Religion, he is aſhamed of them, and governs himſelf only by the Maxims of the World. Others lead a retired Life, they avoid great Companies, and they ſeldom appear in Publick. That State may have its advantages, but it has its dangers too. Thoſe who live thus retired, are apt to think themſelves much better than other Men, becauſe their Conduct ſeems regular and free from Scandal; and this inſpires them with a ſecret Pride, a great Opinion of themſelves, an auſtere and imperious Humour, which makes them apt to ſpeak ill and to judge raſhly of other People, and this drives Charity, Gentleneſs, and Humility out of their Hearts.

I think I have said enough to shew, that Mens various kinds of Life, have a general influence upon the Irregularities of their Deportment. But to make this Truth yet more evident, I shall add Two Reflections to all that has been said. Cause IX.

The first is, That of all the Temptations which are apt to seduce Men, none are more dangerous than those, which are, 1. Necessary and unavoidable. 2. Ordinary and frequent. 3. Hidden and imperceptible. Now the Temptations arising from Mens particular Callings have these Three Characters. 1. They are necessary and unavoidable, we may withstand them, but we cannot avoid altogether being exposed to them. 2. They are frequent and constant, those Employments in which the greatest part of our Lives is spent, offering them to us perpetually. 3. They are hidden and imperceptible; for besides that Men reflect little upon what is ordinary and happens every day; those Temptations are varnished with the specious Pretences of Example and Custom, and even of the lawfulness of the Calling and of Necessity. Thus a Tradesman, is necessarily exposed to the danger of wronging his Neighbour, and of transgressing the Rules of Justice, Equity or Sincerity: The opportunity of doing this returns every minute, and as often as he buys or sells; this Temptation is imperceptible, and except he has a niceness of Conscience, he will not be sensible of it, by reason that

Part I. that his Profeſſion is innocent, that he is allowed to get, and that moſt of the unlawful ways of Gain, are Authorized by Cuſtom.

2. The Second Reflection is, that the greateſt and the moſt inſuperable Obſtacles to Piety, proceed, for the moſt part, from a Mans Calling. It is that which obſtructs more than any thing elſe, the effect of the Goſpel, and Mens Converſion. We Preach, we Exhort to Repentance, But to whom do we ſpeak? We ſpeak to Men engaged in Profeſſions, which, conſidering how they behave themſelves in them, divert them from Piety, and furniſh them with a thouſand Opportunities of ſinning. We ſpeak to People who have choſen already the courſe of their whole Life; who reſolved to continue in the State they are in, and to alter nothing in it; and who have formed to themſelves, that Scheme of Employments, which they intend to follow at any rate. We Preach to People who are no ſooner out of the Church, but they meet at home and in their ordinary buſineſs, with perpetual hindrances to Holineſs, and with Temptations, which it is certain they will not withſtand. Such Hearers may be Preached to long enough, before they reap any fruit from what they hear. Sermons are preſently gone; but the Temptations ariſing from the Profeſſions which Men chuſe, are continual, and laſt as long as their Lives. They accompany a Man every where, he is not jealous of them,

them, he ſeeks them, he gives up himſelf to them, and he fancies he may lawfully do ſo. This is the viſible occaſion of the Goſpels having ſo little Efficacy upon Mens Minds. Cauſe IX.

I ſhall conclude this Chapter with two Remarks which may ſerve for a remedy againſt this Source of Corruption. 1. Every one ought to examine the ſtate and kind of Life he is in; that if this State has ſomething in it that is evil or contrary to the Duty of a Chriſtian, he muſt alter and correct it. If the Profeſſion is bad in it ſelf, nothing elſe can be done, but to quit it. If it is lawful, we muſt take care not to render it dangerous or ſinful, either by neglecting the Duties to which it obliges us, or by not avoiding the ſnares and Temptations that attend it, or by making it an Occaſion and Pretence, to ſatisfie our inordinate Affections. I confeſs we may meet here with Difficulties. It is hard for a Man to leave off a Profeſſion, to go out of his ordinary road of Life, and to renounce ſome Engagements when they are once formed. And yet this ought and may be done, if thoſe Engagements are not lawful. It is better we ſhould offer ſome violence to our ſelves, by breaking them off, or by correcting what is amiſs in them, than to run our ſelves into infinite Miſeries. But the beſt way is to obviate the Evil in its beginning.

Therefore, I ſay, 2*dly*. That ſince People uſe to reſolve upon a Profeſſion while they

are

Part I. are young; that Choice requires a great deal of Prudence and Caution; for no leſs than Temporal and Eternal Happineſs or Miſery depends upon it. But it is a ſad thing to ſee, how raſhly and inconſiderately this matter is gone about. Intereſt, Chance, Paſſion, the Humour of Parents or of young People, are the things which determine ſo important a choice. It is not much conſidered whether a Calling is lawful, or proper for him that embraces it; little or no care is taken to form the Inclinations of Young Perſons; they are given up to their own Conduct, and to all the Temptations of that Profeſſion to which they are deſtined. And thus we need no longer wonder, why Employments are ill diſcharged, why moſt People loſe their Innocence in them, and why there is a general Corruption to be obſerved, in all States and Conditions. This is the Ordinary Effect and Conſequence of Mens particular Callings.

7 DE 61

The End of the Firſt Part.

A TREATISE

Concerning the

CAUSES

OF THE

Present Corruption

OF

CHRISTIANS,

And the Remedies thereof.

PART II.

The Second Edition Corrected.

LONDON,
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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE PREFACE.

ALthough it cannot be conteſted, but that the Corruption of Chriſtians proceeds from thoſe Cauſes, which have been obſerved in the Firſt Part of this Work; yet thoſe Cauſes are not the only Springs from which Corruption flows: There are others beſides, which we are to diſcover now, and which deſerve our moſt ſerious attention.

Hitherto we have found the Cauſes of Corruption, in the ill Diſpoſition of moſt Chriſtians. But thoſe which will be the Subject Matter of this Second Part, are of another Nature. They are more general and of a greater influence, and they may be looked upon as the occaſions of the others. For if it be asked, Why Men are Ignorant, full of Prejudices, poſſeſſed with Falſe Maxims, or Negligent in the Concerns of their Salvation; we may eaſily ſee that this proceeds chiefly, from the want of Order and Diſcipline, from the Defects of Paſtors and Magiſtrates, from Education, and from thoſe other Cauſes, which I deſign to enquire into, at preſent. Things are upon ſuch a foot among Chriſtians in relation to theſe Heads, that it is almoſt impoſſible but that the Corruption of Men muſt be very great; and we muſt not hope

to

to ſtem the Tide of it, unleſs we remove thoſe publick, and general Cauſes of Corruption.

In the next place theſe Cauſes are leſs known, and leſs obſerved than the others. I cannot tell whether it is becauſe they are not thought of, or becauſe no remedy is hoped for; but Men do not appear very ſolicitous to remove them, nor do they ſeem to know them. Great endeavours are uſed in Books and Pulpits, to Inſtruct Men and to bring them to a more Chriſtian Life: Matters of Religion and Morality are carefully Explained, but this does not heal the general Diſorders. The main Cauſes of Remiſneſs do ſtill ſubſiſt, and hinder the Effects of Inſtructions and Exhortations. It were therefore to be wiſhed, that thoſe who are concerned for the reſtoring of Chriſtianity, had larger Views, and did more diligently labour to take away the general Cauſes of Corruption.

Indeed it ſeems more difficult to remedy Theſe I am now to mention, than the firſt General Abuſes are hardly reformed, eſpecially when they are confirmed by a long Cuſtom; and to attempt it may be thought a fruitleſs labour. But all this ought not to diſcourage us. Truths ſo important as theſe are, ought not to be ſuppreſſed; they may produce their fruit in their Seaſon, it is ſtill a great matter to have ſet them in the beſt Light we can: And this is what I ſhall endeavour to do at preſent.

7 DE 61

A TREATISE Concerning the CAUSES Of the Preſent Corruption of CHRISTIANS, And the Remedies thereof.

PART II.

CAUSE I.

The preſent State of the Church, and of Religion in general.

Cauſe I.

Piety is always neceſſary, and the Practice of it is never impoſſible, to thoſe who are well inclined. But yet we muſt confeſs, that the various Circumſtances of Time, Place, and of the State of Religion, contribute much to the progreſs of Piety or of Corruption in the World.

Part II. There are some happy Circumstances, and some Times very favourable to Piety; as on the other hand there are unhappy Circumstances and Times in which it is like a Stranger upon Earth, the means to promote it being then neither so effectual nor so frequent. The Design of this Work, obliges me to consider what may be thought in this respect of the Time we live in, and whether this Corruption which dishonours Christianity, does not proceed from the unhappiness of the Times, and from the present State of the Church and Religion.

But we cannot succeed in this Enquiry, nor pass a sound Judgment upon the present State of Religion, without running back to its first Origin and Nature, and without taking a view of those Ages which are elapsed, since its first Establishment. The Knowledge of the Scripture and of History are here of great use. The Scripture informs us what the state of Religion should be, and History shews us the different States through which it has passed. When we examine Religion by these two Rules, we perceive that it neither has been, nor will be, always in the State it is now in.

It is fit in the first place to seek the true Notion of the Christian Church and Religion in Scripture. There it is that Christianity still subsists in all its Beauty, for neither the Ages which are past, nor the Changes which have happen'd, have been able to tarnish in the least, the Brightness of those Native and Lively Colours,

Colours, in which our Saviour's Religion is ſet forth in Holy Writings. We may take notice of Four Principal Characters in the Idea which the Scripture gives us of the Chriſtian Church and Religion; And theſe are, Truth, Holineſs, Union and Order. Cauſe I.

1. The firſt and the chief Character of this Church and Religion, is the Knowledge and the Profeſſion of the Truth; this is what diſtinguiſhes Chriſtianity from falſe Religions. The Church is the Church of Chriſt no longer, than while She retains the Purity of Faith and of Evangelical Doctrine. It would be needleſs to prove this.

2. The Sacred Writers repreſent the Church as a Society altogether Holy. They name her * *The Spouſe of Chriſt, a glorious Spouſe, having neither ſpot nor wrinkle nor any ſuch thing, but being holy and without blemiſh.* They call her † *The houſe of the living God, a holy Nation, and the aſſembly of the firſt born which are written in Heaven.* They give to Chriſtians, the glorious Tittles of *Kings Prieſts, Saints, Elect, Children of God,* and *New Men*; They ſpeak of them, as of a People ſeparated from the World and its Vices, dedicated to God and to good Works, and living in the practice of Piety, Temperance, Juſtice, Charity, and all other Vertues.

3. Union and Love is the third Character of the Church and of the true Diſciples of Chriſt. The Scripture does not ſpeak to us of

* Eph. V. 27. Pet. II. † Heb. XII.

Part II. many Churches but of one, of which all the Faithful are Members, in what place ſoever they may be. St. *Paul* ſays that there is but *one Faith, one Baptiſm, and one God*; the Apoſtles enjoyn above all things, Union and Charity, and they give many Precepts to maintain theſe, and to make them flouriſh among Chriſtians.

4. As Holineſs and Union cannot be preſerved, where there is no Order; ſo the Church was to be a well regulated Society in which every thing might be done in a convenient and orderly manner. And in fact, there are in the Sacred Writings many Laws to this purpoſe. We find there ſeveral Regulations, concerning the way in which the Church ought to be Governed, and concerning the calling of Biſhops and Paſtors, and the Principal Functions of their Office. The Scripture does beſides appoint the exerciſe of Diſcipline, the manner of proceeding in relation to ſcandalous Sinners, and the Adminiſtration of Publick Alms. It preſcribes the chief Acts of Religion and Divine Worſhip, Prayers, Faſting, Sacraments, Preaching, and ſome other Heads. All theſe Laws are deſigned to eſtabliſh Order and Piety in the Church, and to baniſh Confuſion and Scandals out of it. And this Order cannot be a thing indifferent, ſince the Apoſtles have given us Laws about it.

It is not difficult to ſhew that moſt Chriſtian Societies are hardly to be known by theſe Marks. But before we come to that, it is neceſſary

ceſſary to obſerve the different States through which the Church has paſſed from her Infanty to this time. Cauſe I.

II. If we conſider the Church in her Infancy, we muſt acknowledge, that the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity were very pure, in compariſon of the following. But yet we muſt take heed, when we ſpeak of the purity of the Primitive Church, that we do not form to our ſelves too advantagious an Idea of it, as if Chriſtianity had been then in its utmoſt Purity and Perfection. The Church in her beginnings did conſiſt of Jews and Heathens. Theſe Men embracing Chriſtianity, did not ſo entirely ſtrip themſelves of their Prejudices and Cuſtoms, but that they brought with them into the Church, ſome of the Notions of Judaiſm, and even of Gentiliſm. It is well known that this was the firſt occaſion of thoſe Hereſies which did ſtain the Purity of the Chriſtian Doctrines, and Morals, and the cauſe of ſeveral Diſorders, which happened in the very Times of the Apoſtles. Beſides, the Apoſtles and the firſt Miniſters of the Chriſtian Religion, were not able, by reaſon of the Perſecution and of the obſtacles they met with, to regulate all things as they would have done, if the Church had been in peace. We need not therefore wonder if we find Imperfections and Defects apparent enough, in the State of the Primitive Church. And it is of ſome importance, to obſerve this, not only that we may have true apprehenſions concerning this matter, but that we may

beſides

Part II. beſides obviate an unhappy Conſequence, which might be drawn in favour of the preſent Corruption, from what has been known in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. No doubt but there were Diſorders and Scandals at that time; but we are to remember, that the Church was then made up of Men, who for the moſt part were born, and had lived in Paganiſm, and whoſe Life had been ſpent in the thickeſt darkneſs of Ignorance and Vice.

Yet for all that the Church was then more holy and pure than She has been ſince, or is at this Day in moſt Places. This is matter of fact which cannot reaſonably be conteſted; for beſides that it may be verified, from the Teſtimony which the Sacred, and ſome of the Heathen Authors bear to the Innocency of the Primitive Chriſtians, and that it is probable, that Men were kept in awe while the Apoſtles were alive in the time of Miracles, beſides all this I ſay, there are two Conſiderations which prove, that Corruption could not be then ſo great or ſo general, as it is now.

Theſe Conſiderations are founded upon two undeniable Facts. 1. That the Church was then perſecuted. And 2. That Diſcipline was then exerciſed in it. Theſe were two powerful Means to remove Vices and Scandals from the Church. We may eaſily imagine, that Men who loved the World and their Sins, would not have embraced Chriſtianity at a time, when whoſoever became a Chriſtian, did by that very thing expoſe himſelf to Perſecution,

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Torments and Death. This did fright away the greatest numbers of Wicked and Impious Persons. But if any of these entred into the Church, Discipline for the most part drove them out, when they made themselves notorious by a Scandalous Life. It is easy to judge, that in such Circumstances there was more Piety at that time, than we observe now in the Church. The first Christians were sincere in their Profession. Being Instructed by the Apostles, and Apostolical Men, they placed the Christian Religion chiefly in a good Life, to which they did solemnly engage themselves by Baptism. They were united among themselves; they governed themselves in matters of Order and Discipline by the Prescripts of the Apostles, as much as the Persecution gave them leave; and they did with Courage lay down their Lives for the Truth. Such was the Christianity of the first Ages. Cause I.

But the Church did not continue long in that State before this Zeal of those Primitive Christians began to cool. On the one hand Persecution ceas'd, and on the other, the Ancient Discipline was slackned. These two Fences being pluckt up, and the Emperors turning Christian, the Corruption of the World broke in upon the Church. Divers Abuses crept into Doctrine, Discipline, Worship and Manners, till the Church fell at last, into such a dismal Darkness of Ignorance, Superstition and Vice, that Christianity seem'd almost quite extinct and destroyed. All those who had any

true

Part II. true ſenſe of Religion, did lament this; they complained openly of it, and they longed for a good Reformation. This was the State which the Church and Religion were in, for ſome Centuries.

It did not pleaſe God that thoſe Times of Ignorance ſhould laſt for ever; that Darkneſs began to be diſpers'd in the laſt Century. Then it was that Learning and Languages revived, and that the Holy Scripture, which had been for a great while, a Book unknown to the People, was reſcu'd out of that obſcurity, in which the Barbariſm of former Ages had buried it. Men did perceive that divers Errors had been introduced into Religion; they diſcovered ſeveral Abuſes, they went about to redreſs them, and they ſucceeded ſo far, that in this reſpect, Chriſtianity was reſtored to its Purity. But that great Work could not be finiſhed; ſo that at this Day the Church and Religion, are not yet brought to that State of Perfection which they might be in.

III. For to come now to the preſent State of Religion, it is certain, Firſt that many Chriſtian Churches are ſtill very near in the ſame Darkneſs, Men were in ſome Ages ago. I ſhall ſay nothing of the ſinking of Chriſtianity in *Aſia* and *Africa*; there is more Knowledge in *Europe*; but yet in many Places we may obſerve almoſt all thoſe Diſorders, which prevailed in the Times of the groſſeſt Ignorance. Nay, our Age is more unhappy than the precedent, in that thoſe Abuſes have been confirmed

firmed and authorized by Laws, and are now ſupported by Force. How many Countries and Churches are there, where the People know almoſt nothing of the Goſpel, where Religion is reduced to Childiſh and Superſtitious Devotions and Practices, where the moſt Ridiculous things are believed, and the moſt ſhameful Errors received; where the looſneſs of Manners may almoſt be parallel'd with Heatheniſm, where the moſt execrable Crimes are committed? In a word, where the Ignorance both of the People and Clergy are general, excepting only ſome few underſtanding Men who are ſenſible of theſe Diſorders, but are reſtrain'd by Fear from diſcovering their Sentiments. From thoſe Places Corruption ſpreads to others, and it would not be difficult to ſhew by ſeveral Inſtances that the Cauſe of Impiety, Ignorance and Vice, is to be found in thoſe Places which ſhould be the Fountains of Piety and Religion. Cauſe I.

What I have now ſaid, is not to be applied to all Churches; for ſome there are, where Religion is not ſo corrupted, and where a purer Chriſtianity is profeſſed. But yet let us enquire in the ſecond place, whether there are any Chriſtian Societies, where nothing is wanting or to be deſired in the State of the Church and Religion, and where it would not be neceſſary to make ſome Alterations and Conſtitutions, in order to come nearer to Perfection? This deſerves to be examined with Care, and without Prepoſſeſſion. We ought here to lay aſide the Spirit of a Party, and ingeniouſly to acknow-

Part II. acknowledge Defects where they are. For else if every one is wedded to the Society of which he is a Member, nothing can ever be remedied. For supposing that there are Defects, what Remedy can be used, if we are all possessed with this Prejudice, That all is Perfect in our Society? Is not this the way to Canonize Abuses, and to prevent the restoring of Order?

And First, We ought not to wonder, if there should still be Imperfections in the purest Societies. It would be a kind of Miracle, if there were none remaining. God does not always think fit to finish his Work all at once; unless he had made use of Inspired Men, such as the Prophets or the Apostles were. It was impossible so to attain Perfection, and to provide for every thing at first dash, that nothing more should be desired. Besides, Circumstances are so much altered that it seems necessary, to change several things that were left in the last Age. It is further to be considered, that tho' Christians did long for a good Reformation, yet great Difficulties were to be overcome to bring it about. Mens Minds were not much enlighten'd, they were just creeping out of Darkness, and a long Custom had almost obliterated the true Ideas of Religion. Almost all those who were in Civil or Ecclesiastical Authority, did obstinately defend the Abuses which all good Men thought it necessary to Redress. Extream Severity was used towards those who desired this Reformation of the Church. All this did terrify a great many well-meaning Persons,

and

and was the cauſe, that in ſeveral Places, Cauſe
thoſe who had Courage enough to Condemn I.
the Abuſes openly, were not able for want of
Means, to do all that the Intereſt of Religi-
on required. They were fain in thoſe Places
to yield ſomething to the Iniquity of the
Times, and to ſettle Things as well as they
could till a more favourable Opportunity.
Some Churches came nearer to Perfection than
others. But howſoever, if we would paſs a
right Judgmeut upon the preſent State of the
Church and Religion, we ought to Examine
the Thing in it ſelf, and without Partiality.
Upon this I ſhall offer here ſome general Con-
ſiderations, and refer to the following Chap-
ter ſome Heads, which will require an exact
and particular Diſcuſſion. I will firſt reſume
the Four Characters, which the Scripture
gives us of the Chriſtian Church and Religi-
on; which are, Truth, holineſs, Union and
Order.

1. All Chriſtian Societies boaſt that they
profeſs the Truth; and that very thing is
enough to ſhew that many of them are in Er-
ror, ſince they do not agree among themſelves
about the Articles to be believed. I will not
enlarge on this Head, becauſe it would lead
me into many Particulars, and in ſome reſpect,
into Controverſy. I ſhall only ſay, that if
we did judge of what is to be believed in Re-
ligion, by that which ought to be the Prin-
ciple and Rule of Faith among Chriſtians, I
mean, the Holy Scripture, we would ſoon

per-

Part II. perceive on which ſide the Truth lies. We might obſerve in that Society which vaunts it ſelf to be the pureſt of all and even which pretends to be Infallible, and the only True Church exclusive of all other, abſurd Tenets and monſtrous Doctrines, equally repugnant to Scripture and Reaſon, and we ſhould be convinced, that the Doctrine of thoſe Churches which did ſeparate from that Society, is much more conſonant to the Goſpel.

2. We muſt have a very mean Notion of Chriſtianity, if we can believe that Holineſs, which is the ſecond Character of the Church, is to be found among Chriſtians at this time. The complaint of the laſt Ages was, That Religion wanted to be Reformed in Doctrine, Worſhip, Diſcipline and Manners. It was reformed in part by the rejecting of thoſe Errors and Abuſes, which were crept into Doctrine, Worſhip and Diſcipline; but the Reformation of Manners is ſtill behind. The People have not as yet been Reformed in this regard, except perhaps in thoſe Times and Places where they have been Perſecuted. As for the reſt, they have ſcarce changed any thing beſides their Belief and Worſhip; this alone proves that the State of the Church is yet imperfect. Holineſs is the Scope of Religion, it is the chief Character of Chriſtianity; ſo that where Holineſs and purity of Manners is not, Religion muſt be very defective.

III. Union, Peace and Charity, as was ſaid before, are one of the eſſential Marks of the

Diſci-

Diſciples and Church of Chriſt. But where is this Character to be found? The Church at this Day is rent into Factions and Parties. We cannot ſay, that there is but one Church; we muſt ſay, that there are many Religions and Churches. Chriſtians divide not only upon Lawful Grounds, which make Separation neceſſary, but about things of ſmall Conſequence. Upon the leaſt diverſity of Opinions, they pronounce *Anathema* againſt one another, form different Sects and Communions. Even thoſe Churches which might have a common Belief and Intereſt are not united. Thoſe Men who by their Office ſhould be the Miniſters of Peace, are but too often the Firebrands of Diviſion. I deſire no other Proof of this, but that Zeal which moſt Divines expreſs about the Diſputes of Religion, and that little Diſpoſition which is found among them, to ſacrifice ſome Opinions, or Expreſſions, to the Peace of the Church. Cauſe I.

I do not condemn all Diſputes without diſtinction, for ſome are neceſſary. The Apoſtles command the Rulers of the Church, to eſtabliſh with Care, Pure Doctrine, and to Confute thoſe who endeavour to corrupt it. They did themſelves on many Occaſions Diſpute againſt Falſe Teachers. To deſert the Truth when attacked, were to make but little account of it: This would be a betraying the Intereſt of Piety, ſince Piety is always founded upon Truth. Diſputes become neceſſary, when Eſſential Truths are to be defended.

Part II. Neither would I reduce all profitable or lawful Diſputes, to thoſe only which concern Fundamentals. There are Errors, which tho' not Mortal, yet are dangerous, and ſo it is needful to oppoſe them: And there are Truths, which tho' not Fundamental, are yet of great uſe in Religion, and may ſerve to confirm the Principles of Chriſtianity. It is fit that ſuch Truths ſhould be Diſcuſſed, provided this be done with Moderation and Honeſty.

I only blame uſeleſs Diſputes, or theſe, which tho' they may have their uſe, yet are accompanied with thoſe Paſſions and Diſorders, which blind Zeal inſpires. Such Controverſies which are but too common, are extreamly fatal to Religion. We are not able to expreſs what Miſchiefs they occaſion in the Church, and how prejudicial they are to the progreſs of Chriſtianity in general, and of Piety in particular. It may ſeem at firſt, that becauſe the people do not take cognizance of theſe Conteſts, they ſhould prove hurtful only to thoſe Learned Men by whom alone they are managed; but yet the whole Church feels the ill Effects of them.

1. By reaſon of theſe Diſputes, the People are deſtitute of Edification, or at leaſt they do not receive all the Edification which is neceſſary. Church-men being only full of theſe, Study and Meditate upon nothing elſe; in their Sermons they ſpeak only of theſe Matters, which take them up, and which ſeem capital to

to them. They have neither Leiſure nor Inclination to mind things of another Nature, and to ſet about Reforming the Manners of Chriſtians; or they do it but faintly and careleſly. Whilſt a Miniſter is very buſy in his Study or Pulpit, about Confuting an Adverſary whom he never ſaw, or an Error which is unknown to his whole Flock, his Sheep are loſt, his Hearers remain poſſeſt with mortal Errors concerning Morality, and ingaged in the moſt vicious Habits. This is the Fruit of moſt Diſputes, they occaſion the Ruin, rather than the Edification of the Hearers. Cauſe I.

2. Diſputes keep up among Chriſtians falſe Zeal, Hypocriſy and Licentiouſneſs. The People learn by the Example of their Teachers, to place their Zeal, not in oppoſing Vice, but in underſtanding Controverſy, in adhering to certain Opinions, and in bearing a ſtrong Hatred to thoſe who diſſent from them. They judge that what makes the ordinary Employment of Divines, what they inſiſt moſt upon, what kindles their Zeal, and excites in them the moſt violent Paſſions, muſt needs be the moſt important thing in Religion.

3. Sometimes the People take part in the Quarrels of their Teachers, from whence proceed unavoidable Animoſities and Diviſions, which extinguiſh Love, and the Spirit of Chriſtianity, and which create inſuperable Obſtacles to the Peace of the Church, and the Re-union of Chriſtians. Of this we have but too many Inſtances.

Part II. 4. Laſtly, the little Union which is in the Church, is one of the great Cauſes of the ſmall Progreſs of Chriſtianity. Chriſtians inſtead of making their Religion appear Lovely and Venerable, to *Jews* and Infidels, expoſe it to their Contempt. Inſtead of endeavouring to Propagate the Chriſtian Faith, and to deſtroy Idolatry, they turn their own Weapons againſt themſelves; they mind nothing but the promoting the Intereſt of their particular Sects, and they neglect that of Chriſtianity in general. On the other hand, Unbelievers, ſeeing that Chriſtians are not agreed among themſelves, take occaſion from thence to Queſtion every thing, and they judge that there can be nothing but uncertainty and obſcurity in a Religion, where there is nothing but Controverſy and different Opinions.

The want of Union is then, a moſt conſiderable Imperfection in the preſent State of the Church. It were to be wiſhed, that ſome Remedy might be applied to ſo great an Evil, and that thoſe Controverſies which produce and cheriſh it, might be turned out of Doors. The way to compaſs this, would be to endeavour in good earneſt, the Reforming of Manners, and the reſtoring of Order. This great and noble Deſign will no ſooner be purſued, but Men will be aſhamed of all theſe Contentions, they will look upon them as trifling Amuſements, and find no reliſh in thoſe Diſputes, which to ſay the truth, do only employ ſuch Perſons as are conceited with vain Learning,

Learning, and narrow-ſpirited Men, who are not capable of larger and higher Views. Cauſe I.

IV. If we examine the preſent State of the Church with relation to Order, there we muſt ingenuouſly confeſs, that great Defects are to be found. In Matters of Order and Diſcipline, Chriſtians ought to Regulate themſelves, Firſt by the Laws which Chriſt and his Apoſtles have ſet them? and then by the Example of the Primitive Church and of the Pureſt Antiquity, it being evident, that what has been practiſed in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, and does beſides agree with the Rules and the Spirit of the Goſpel, ſhould have a great regard paid to it, by all Chriſtians. Now it cannot be denied, but that moſt Churches have conſiderably departed from that Ancient Order.

To prove this by ſome Inſtances, it is certain in fact, that the Eccleſiaſtical Order and Government, which obtains in many Places, is not ſuch as it ought to be. None can be ignorant of this, but thoſe who are altogether unacquainted with Antiquity, or who being full of Prejudices find what they pleaſe in Scripture, and Church-Hiſtory. Can it be ſaid, that the Elections of Biſhops or Paſtors, are Canonical, as they are managed in many Places, and that the Practice and Order, eſtabliſhed by the Apoſtles and the Primitive Chriſtians, are obſerved every where? It is certain likewiſe, that all Churches are not furniſhed with a ſufficient Number of Perſons,

Part II. to perform Divine-Service, and to Inſtruct and Edify the People. When we look back upon the Primitive Church, we find, that tho' it was poor and perſecuted, yet it had its Biſhops, its Prieſts, its Catechiſts and its Widows. At this time we ſee yet in ſeveral Places, that one ſingle Town maintains a great Number of Church-men, who indeed, for the moſt part, are very inſignificant; but elſewhere it is quite otherwiſe, one ſingle Man does often perform all the Eccleſiaſtical Functions; nay, ſometimes many Churches have but one Paſtor. This Diſorder as well as many others, proceeds partly from the want of neceſſary Means and Funds, to ſupply the occaſions of all Churches. Here it might be proper to ſpeak of the Paſtoral Functions, and of the Adminiſtration of Diſcipline; but theſe Two Heads being important, I reſerve what I have to ſay about them, for the Two next Chapters.

We ought here not to omit the want of Union and Correſpondence among Churches. If they had more Communication and Intercourſe one with another, great Advantages would follow from thence. Right Meaſures might be taken for the Edification of the People, and for the Redreſſing of Abuſes and Scandals; that Uniformity which is ſo neceſſary, both in Worſhip, and in Church-Government and Diſcipline, might be eſtabliſhed; And that would contribute much to the Honour and Safety of Religion in general. The Church

Church would appear then like a well-ordered Society, and like One Body, of which all the Parts should maintain a relation to, and a strict dependance upon one another. On the other hand, it is a great unhappiness, when Churches have little or no Intercourse or Communication one with another, so that every one orders its Matters and Customs, the form of its Worship and Government, within it self. Cause I.

Thus in many respects, it would be easy to shew, that Things are not altogether Regulated in the Church, as they ought to be, with relation to Order. Men are not sensible of these Defects, because they are apt to judge of Religious Matters, by the Practice of the present Time, and by the Customs of their respective Countries; besides, that Antiquity is but little known. And yet these Defects contribute more than is commonly imagined, to the decay of Piety and Zeal. The want of Order in any Society, does most certainly bring Confusion and Licentiousness into it.

V. The Worship of God being the end and the essence of Religion, we cannot but inquire whether all things are well regulated with relation to that. To speak here only of the publick Worship, it would be very necessary, that it should be performed every where in such a manner, that the People might understand, the most essential Parts of Religion and Divine Worship, to be Adoration, Praise, and the Invocation of God; and that the discharging of these Duties is the end of Publick Assemblies.

Part II. ſemblies. I remark this particularly, becauſe in many places, Devotion is placed only in the hearing of Sermons. Churches are properly nothing elſe but Auditories. People fancy that Sermons are the chief thing they meet for, and that Preaching is the Principal Function to be exerciſed by Miniſters in the Church. The Prayers and the Pſalms, are looked upon only as Preliminaries or Circumſtances to a Sermon. This is a dangerous Notion, becauſe on the one hand it makes Chriſtians neglect Divine Service, and on the other it renders Religion contemptible, when Sermons are not ſo Edifying as they ſhould be, which happens but too often. And therefore it would not perhaps be amiſs, if as it is practiſed in ſeveral Churches, Divine Service was diſtinguiſhed from Sermons by ſome circumſtances of times or Perſons; ſo that it might be one thing to celebrate Divine Service, and another, to hear Sermons.

Several Reflections might be offered here concerning the principal things relating to Publick Worſhip, ſuch as Forms of Prayers, Liturgies, the manner of praiſing God, and Sacred Hymns. It would be a Queſtion worth the examining, whether we ought in Chriſtian Churches, to uſe only Pſalms and Canticles, out of the Old Teſtament, among which tho' ſome are moſt edifying and full of excellent expreſſions of Piety; yet there are many which relate altogether to ſome particular paſſages of thoſe Times; or if they ſpeak of Chriſt,

Chriſt, it is only in a Prophetical ſtyle, very obſcure to the People. One would think that Chriſtian Hymns, which ſhould be ſung to the honour of God and Jeſus Chriſt, chiefly to celebrate the Wonders of our Redemption, might be extraordinary uſeful, to nouriſh Piety and to ſtir up Devotion, as well as more agreeable to that, which the Apoſtles preſcribe, and which the Primitive Chriſtians practiſed in their Aſſemblies. Would it not likewiſe be neceſſary to agree about giving the Holy Sacrament to ſick and dying Perſons; and to reſtore the more frequent uſe of the Euchariſt, according to the practice of the Apoſtles and of the Primitive Church? Faſting being enjoyned by our Saviour, and eſtabliſhed by the example of the Apoſtles, and by the univerſal practice of the firſt Chriſtians, and of all the Churches in the World for ſeveral Ages; there is reaſon to wonder that in ſome places this Duty ſhould be almoſt out of date. For as to ſolemn Faſts, which are celebrated from time to time, and ſeldom enough; thoſe are not properly the Faſts of which the Goſpel ſpeaks, and which were obſerved by the Ancients: They are Acts of publick Humiliation, deſigned for times of Calamity, or of extraordinary Devotion, and the uſe of theſe ought not to be too frequent, becauſe Cuſtom is apt to leſſen their effect. But I mean thoſe Faſts which are Helps to Devotion and Holineſs, and Means to mortify the Body, and to diſpoſe Men to Humiliation and Repentance. Uniſor-

Cauſe I.

Part II. Uniformity in Divine Worſhip would be another very neceſſary Eſtabliſhment. It would ſhew the unity of Faith, it would render Religion venerable, and prevent thoſe Diſorders and Confuſions, which are inevitable, when Rites and Practices quite different, nay, ſometimes contrary to one another, are obſerved in ſeveral Churches.

Laſtly, Care ſhould be taken, that Divine Service might be performed every where, in an orderly grave and decent manner. The exterior of Religion, has a greater influence than we imagine, upon the eſſence of it; beſides that we have an expreſs Law, * which ſays, *That all things ſhould be done decently and in order.* Indeed, Pageantry and Pomp, the great number of Ceremonies, and whatever ſavours of Superſtition, ought to be avoided, as well as every thing which is contrary to the eſſence of Evangelical Worſhip: And it were better to fall into an exceſs of Simplicity, than to clog Religion with too many Ceremonies. But yet under pretence of Simplicity, we are not to run into Confuſion, and to neglect the externals of Religion and Divine Service. If we ſhould examine by this Rule what is done in ſome Churches, with relation for inſtance, to the Laws and Forms of Publick Aſſemblies, to the celebration of Divine Worſhip and the Sacraments, and to the Perſons who receive the Communion, and

* 1 Cor. XIV. 40.

who

who officiate; we might find there several things to be rectified. And it would be very useful to take this into Consideration, for the want of Gravity and Decency, and a dry and careless performing of Publick Worship, render Religion despicable, and make the People, who commonly judge of things by their outsides, to entertain a mean notion of Divine Service; which produces the contempt of Religion, and by consequence ill Manners. Cause I.

VI. This contempt of Religion is another Fault, which ought not to be passed over in silence. It has been always the general sense of Mankind, that Religion is to be honoured and respected. The Heathen Religions, as false as they were, did attract the Veneration of the People; and the same may be seen at this day, among the several Nations of Infidels. Certainly then the Christian Religion deserves all the veneration and respect, which Men are capable of. But it must be confessed, that in many places, it is falling of late, into a very great outward meanness. Men are accustoming themselves, to look with indifference, with haughtiness and scorn upon every thing which has any relation to the Church or to Religion. This appears especially in the contempt, which is expressed towards the Clergy. Tho' the Scripture represents their Office, as a most Excellent and honourable Imployment; tho' it enjoyns Christians, to * Honour, Love and Reverence those, who

* Heb. XIII. 17. 1 Thess. V. 13.

have

Part II. have the rule over them; yet the Eccleſiaſtical Order is generally but little honoured: And what is more ſurprizing, it is moſt depreſſed and abaſed, in thoſe Churches which otherwiſe profeſs a purer Doctrine and Worſhip, than other Chriſtian Societies. I do not ſpeak of all Churches in general; but whoever ſees what is practiſed in many places, would be apt to think, that it was a part of the Reformation of the Church, to ſtrip the Clergy of all Eccleſiaſtical Authority, and of every thing that might render them venerable to the People, and to ſet them upon a low and contemptible Foot. Their Character is become Abject, if not Odious, and it becomes ſo more and more every Day. That which makes it more deſpicable, is the Poverty which many of them are forced to live in.

It is not difficult to find out the Grounds of this Contempt. It may be juſtly charged upon the Clergy themſelves, their Character is become vile, becauſe they expoſe it; but it does not follow that Men have a Right to deſpiſe them; all that is to be done, is to endeavour the reclaiming of them. If under pretence of Perſons being unworthy, or of ſome abuſe in Offices, it was lawful to deſpiſe the Profeſſions themſelves, would not even Magiſtracy be often the vileſt of all Imployments? May we not ſay alſo, that Church-men do not well maintain their Character, becauſe they are deſpiſed? An Office which is ſlighted will never be well diſcharged; it is ſel-

dom

dom that great worth is to be found in a Post which is little honoured, or rather much despised. Cause I.

The chief cause of this Contempt was the manner in which things were ordered in the last Century. Persecution, Poverty and the Opposition of the higher Powers, were at first great Obstacles to the establishing of good Order. Princes and great Men did possess themselves of the Revenues and Authority of the Church. Nothing was left to Church-men, but the care of making Sermons, and of Administring the Sacraments. They were turned into bare Preachers; a Character which for the most part is not very fit to create Respect. I say nothing here of the Discipline and Government of the Church, because I am to speak of these more largely by and by.

This Abasement of Religion and of the Ministry, is a visible Cause of Corruption. As soon as Sacred things are disregarded, Impiety must needs prevail; especially if the Ministers of Religion are despised, then Religion can have no great force upon Men's Minds. The Master cannot be honoured, when his Servants are slighted. Men, who are without Authority, cannot keep the People in their Duty. Whatsoever comes from an abject Person, who is neither beloved nor esteemed, can never be received with Submission. The Contempt of Pastors, draws of necessity after it the contempt of Divine Service, of Preaching, and of other Sacred Functions.

The

Part II. The Poverty of Church-men, is not much leſs fatal to the Church, than the immenſe and exceſſive Riches which did formerly corrupt the Clergy. For beſides, that in thoſe times and places in which the Chriſtian Religion is predominant, and profeſſed by Perſons of Quality, Poverty makes the Miniſters of Religion Contemptible to the People, and even to Great Men, it being certain that in thoſe Circumſtances, it is neceſſary that Miniſters ſhould live with ſome credit; beſides this I ſay, that Poverty diſables them from exerciſing Hoſpitality, from minding their Function as they ought, and from diſcharging the Duties of it with Authority and Zeal: It forces them to have recourſe to ſeveral mean or unlawful Methods to ſupply their Neceſſities, and thoſe of their Families, and to do many things which do not comport with their Imployment. From thence proceeds likewiſe the want of able Miniſters. A great many Perſons who might have the neceſſary Talents, Qualifications and Means, to be very uſeful in the Church, take a diſguſt at that Profeſſion, by the fear of Contempt or Poverty. As long as things are in this State, Religion will be deſpiſed, and Corruption will ſtill be in vogue.

It is not ſo eaſy to remove this Cauſe of Corruption as it is to detect it. The re-eſtabliſhing of Order, ſeems to be a thing extreamly difficult. To this end it would be requiſite, that Princes and Church-men ſhould

Act in Conjunction. But there are few Chriſtian Princes who lay this to heart, and Divines have quite other things in their thoughts; Their great buſineſs is to maintain what is eſtabliſhed, and to diſpute with thoſe who find fault with it. On the other hand, Knowledge or Reſolution is wanting, and there is not enough of honeſty or greatneſs of Soul, to confeſs the Truth. Few Writers have the Courage to ſpeak ſo impartially, as the Famous Author of the Hiſtory of the Reformation in *England* has done, in the Preface to his Second Volume. It is thought by many Perſons, that all would be ruined if the leaſt alteration was made. Some of thoſe Defects which have been mentioned in this Chapter, are now become inviolable Cuſtoms and Laws. Every body fancies true and pure Chriſtianity to be that which obtains in his Country, or in the Society he lives in; and it is not ſo much as put to the queſtion, whether or not ſome things ſhould be altered. As long as Chriſtians are poſſeſſed with theſe Prejudices, we muſt not expect to ſee Chriſtianity reſtored to an entire Purity. Cauſe I.

But yet it is to be hoped from the Grace of God, and the force of Truth, that Chriſtians will open their Eyes at laſt, and that Divines will grow ſenſible of the neceſſity of minding theſe Things. The main point here is to ſhake off all Prejudice, and to conſider Things in their Nature and Original. Our Saviour has left us an Excellent Rule, when ſpeaking

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Part II. of the Abuſes which had been ſo long received among the *Jews*, in reference to Marriage, he tells us, **That from the beginning it was not ſo.* This Maxim is of great uſe, and a lover of Truth and Vertue, ſhould always have it before his Eyes. It were to be wiſhed, that we ſhould ſtill appeal to it, and that inſtead of Governing our ſelves by the Cuſtom of the preſent Time, we ſhould run up to the Ancient Conſtitution, and compare what is done at this Day, with that which has been, and ought to be done. This would be the true Way to Reform Abuſes, and to draw near to Perfection, and to bring things back into the Natural and Primitive Channel.

CAUSE II.

The want of Diſcipline.

IT is not my Deſign in this Chapter to ſpeak of Church Diſcipline in general. I ſhall only inſiſt upon that Part of it, the End of which is to Regulate the manners of Chriſtians. And this is an important Matter. The want of Diſcipline is one of the greateſt Imperfections which have been obſerved in the preſent State of the Church, and one of the moſt evident and general Cauſes of the Corruption of Chriſtians. But becauſe ſome Men have pretended, that Diſcipline, ſuch as I ſup-

* Matth. XIX.

poſe

pose it in this Chapter, was a Humane and Arbitrary Institution, the observation of which was not absolutely necessary, and might be dangerous; I think it proper to say something here, concerning the Original and the Necessity of the Discipline of the Church. Cause II.

It is certain in the first place, that all Societies and Bodies, have a Right to establish an Order to Regulate themselves by, and to provide for their Security and Preservation. When several Men or People, unite to Form a Body, they have Power to make Laws and Regulations, to which all the Members of that Body, may be tyed; and to exclude those from their Communion, who will not submit to them. But these Laws ought not to clash with other Laws already established, nor with just and acknowledged Rights. I think, this Power which is granted to the meanest of Societies, cannot be denied to the Church; and this proves already that the Church had a Right to Appoint a Discipline to which, all her Members should be subject, provided, that Discipline did not on the one hand prejudice Publick Tranquility, and the Authority of the Magistrates; nor any ways contradict on the other hand, the Laws of the Gospel. Now as Discipline is not liable to either of these Inconveniencies, but does rather perfectly agree with the welfare of Civil Society, and the Spirit of the Christian Religion, as will be proved hereafter; so the establishing of it, seems to be equally lawful and necessary. I.

Part II. II. But further, Diſcipline is an Order, which has God for its Author. We find the Inſtitution of it in Holy Scripture, and in the Laws of Chriſt, and of his Apoſtles; I ſhall recite the Chief of theſe.

1. In St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, Chap. XVIII. 15, 16, 17. We read theſe Words, *If thy Brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone: If he ſhall hear thee thou haſt gained thy Brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three Witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen Man and a Publican.* For the right underſtanding of theſe Words, we muſt know that our Saviour does not enact here a new Law, and that an Order like that which is here preſcribed, was already obſerved among the *Jews*. But here, as upon many Occaſions, our Saviour did comply with the Cuſtoms and Practice of that Nation, becauſe he judged that thoſe Cuſtoms were good, and fit for his views and purpoſes. The firſt Chriſtians did the ſame in matter of Order and Government, they did form the Chriſtian Church upon the Model of the *Jewiſh* Aſſemblies, and upon the Method which was there obſerved.

This is the Key of the Place I have now quoted. Our Saviour approves the *Jewiſh* Practice and enjoyns his Diſciples to obſerve the

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ſame Order amongſt them. It cannot be doubted but that this was his meaning. For he ſpeaks to his Diſciples, and it appears by all the circumſtances of this Paſſage, and by the ſequel of his Diſcourſe, that he is giving here a Law, which concerns the Chriſtian Church. It is true indeed, that he properly ſpeaks of private Difference, but what he ſays ought to be applied to all thoſe Diſorders, which may happen in the Church, and particularly to Scandals. And ſurely it is evident, that if we may proceed in the Methods here enjoyned, when the Caſe is only concerning ſome differences between private Men, we have much more right to do ſo with relation to publick Sins, ſince they are Caſes which concern the whole Church, and that directly, and which do yet more properly belong to her Cogniſance, than the quarrels of private Men. The Meaning of Chriſt is then, that there muſt be an Order in his Church for the removing of Scandals. He ſuppoſes that the Church has a Right to interpoſe upon thoſe Occaſions, and he commands that thoſe who ſhall refuſe to hear the Church, be looked upon as if they were her Members no longer, and that Communication with them ſhould be avoided: This is the import of theſe words, *Let him be unto thee as a Heathen Man and Publican.*

Cauſe II.

2. The V. Chapter of the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, ver. 2, 3, 4. decides this Matter. St. *Paul* having been informed, that there was a Man among the *Corinthians*, who lived in

Part II. Inceſt, he writes about it to that Church; and firſt he reproves them, *for not having cut off from their Communion, the Perſon who had committed ſo Infamous an Action.* In the next place he does himſelf Excommunicate that Man and deliver him up to Satan. I know that perhaps this Power of delivering up to Satan belonged only to the Apoſtles, and it is likely, that this was one of thoſe extraordinary Puniſhments, which they had a Power to inflict upon Prophane and Rebellious Perſons. But as for Excommunication, it is the common and ordinary Right of the Church. This Right, or rather this Duty of the Church, is clearly aſſerted by the Cenſure which the Apoſtle addreſſes to the *Corinthians*, becauſe *they had not taken that Inceſtuous Perſon from among them*, and becauſe they had not obſerved the Order he had given them before, not to ſuffer Fornicators; * *I wrote unto you already not to company with Fornicators.* He repeats this Order in theſe Words, which contain an expreſs and general Law againſt all Scandalous Sinners. † *I write it unto you again, not to keep company; if any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolator, or a Railler, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with ſuch an one, no not to eat.* This is poſitive: And what the Apoſtle adds, *Do not ye judge them that are within?* is a confirmation that the Church has a Right to do ſo, with relation to her Members. Laſtly he concludes with theſe Words,

* Ver. 9. † Ver. 11.

* *There-*

Cause II.

* *Therefore put away from among your selves that wicked Person*; for thus this Verse is to be rendred, as the Drift of the whole Chapter, of which this is the Conclusion, shews it evidently. I desire the force of this Proof may be considered. It is not one single Passage which I here produce, it is a whole Chapter, it is a Thread of Arguments, and of expres and reiterated Injunctions. St. *Paul* describes those whom the Church ought not to suffer in her Bosom, he appoints what is to be done in reference to them; which is, that they ought to be cut off from the Body of Christians, and that their Company is to be avoided. There cannot be a clear and expres Law, if this is not so.

3. There are some other Places which have no ambiguity in them, 2 *Thess.* III. 6. *We command you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, this Preface is Remarkable; here is a Law in due Form, which the Apostle is going to deliver, he proposes it by way of Command, and he interposes the Authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, *We command you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.* This Law is repeated, v. 14. *If any Man obey not our word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

4. The 1st Epistle to *Timothy*, affords us Proofs unanswerable. The design of St. *Paul* in

* Ver. 13.

Part II. this Epiſtle is to eſtabliſh Order and Diſcipline in the Church. To this purpoſe he gives ſeveral Precepts to *Timothy*; he Inſtructs him exactly how Paſtors ought to proceed about Information, Cenſures, and the principal Offices of Church-Government. * *Rebuke not an Elder but inſtruct him as a father, and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers, the younger as ſiſters, with all purity.* † *Againſt an Elder (or a Prieſt) receive not an accuſation but before two or three witneſſes: Them that ſin rebuke before all, that others alſo may fear, I charge thee before God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Elect Angels, that thou obſerve theſe things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.* I might add other Places out of this Epiſtle and the following, and out of that to *Titus*, || Here is then again, a whole Thread of Diſcourſe, preſcribing the Order according to which the Church is to be Governed. Here are particular Rules; and St. *Paul* uſes an Adjuration to obliges *Timothy* to obſerve them. Theſe Laws do not concern *Timothy* in particular, but St. *Paul* ſpeaks here of the Epiſcopal Function, and of the Duty of the Paſtors of the Church in general. We need but read the Epiſtles to *Timothy*, and the beginning of that which he writes to *Titus*, to be ſatisfied that he intends that this Order ſhould be ſettled in all the Churches.

Either there is nothing plain in Scripture,

* Chap. V. † 1 Tim. V. 1, 2, 19, 20, 21. || Tit. III. 10.

Of

or it appears from all these Places, That Discipline is Instituted of God; that the exercise of it is committed to Pastors; that scandalous Sinners are not to be tolerated in the Church; that private Men ought to avoid their Company; and that the Governours of the Church are bound to proceed against them, by private and publick Censures, and even by Excommunication. If the Passages I have cited do not prove all this, we may wrangle about every thing, and all Arguments from the Sacred Writings may be eluded. The Institution of the Sacraments is not more expres or positive. Cause II.

III. But tho' these Places were not so positive and so clear as they are, yet we may be assured that this is their true meaning, because this is the sense in which the whole Primitive Church understood them. The Practice of the first Ages, in conjunction with the Laws of Christ and of his Apostles amounts to a Demonstration, which cannot be withstood; besides that we are to presume, that what has been practised from the Foundation of the Church, and in the time of her Purity, was settled by the Apostles themselves, or by Apostolical Men, so that we ought as much as possibly to conform our selves to it. Now we know that Discipline was observed in the Primitive Church, notwithstanding the unhappiness of the Times, and the Persecution. This is unquestionable matter of fact, and therefore I shall take it for granted; and only say in short, that then all those who embraced Christiani-

Part II. ty were engaged by a ſolemn Vow to renounce the Vices of the Age, and to lead a holy Life; that thoſe who were Baptized were not ſuffered to live diſorderly; that vicious Perſons were debarred the Holy Myſteries; that thoſe who fell into great Sins were Excommunicated, as well as thoſe who were Contumacious and Incorrigible; that ſuch were not reſtor'd to the Peace of the Church, but after various degrees of Penance, and a publick acknowledgment of their Faults; and that as to thoſe who relapſed, they were received only at the Hour of Death. Very clear Monuments of this Practice are ſtill extant, in the Writings of the Ancient Doctors of the Church, as well as in the Old Canons and Decrees of Councils. This Diſcipline muſt needs have been very ſeverely obſerved, ſince St. *Ambroſe* was not afraid to put it in Practice againſt the Emperor *Theodoſius*.

I am not ignorant, that the Primitive Church has varied about certain Circumſtances, that the Penitents were treated ſometimes with more and ſometimes with leſs ſeverity, and that the time of their Penance was longer or ſhorter: But as to the main or the eſſence of Diſcipline, it did always obtain in the Primitive Church. And it was as little queſtion'd then, Whether Diſcipline ought to be obſerved, as whether Chriſtians ſhould be Baptized. This uſage among the firſt Chriſtians is at leaſt a ſtrong preſumption in favour of Diſcipline; but it being conſonant beſides to what we read

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in the New Testament, I do not see how there can remain any doubt about this Matter. Cause II.

IV. In the last place, the Nature of Discipline it self, proves the usefulness and necessity of it. All those who are not blinded with Prejudice, must own, that Discipline considered in it self, is altogether agreeable to the Spirit of Christianity. 1. The honour of Religion, and the promoting of Christ's Kingdom, require Order in the Church. Who does not see but that if the Church did tolerate Scandalous Persons and take them into her Bosom, and make no difference between them and the Faithful; She might justly be charged with all the Disorders and Scandals which are observed in the Lives of bad Christians, and be looked upon by Infidels, as a prophane Society, where Vice is permitted. But the exercise of Discipline is an authentick disowning of Vice, whereby the Church declares publickly that She does not allow of it.

2. Discipline is a most efficacious means to procure the Conversion of Sinners. A Man must be very much hardened, when the being removed from the Communion of Christians, does not reclaim him. But when a Scandalous Person is suffered to live in the Society of the Faithful, when he is admitted to the same Priviledges with other Members of the Church, this gives him an occasion to harden himself in Sin, and to think that he is as good a Christian, and that he has as much Right to Salvation as others, which is a most danger-

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Part II. ous, but withal a most common Imagination.

3. Discipline is useful to the Church in general. Many who may otherwise have ill Inclinations, are restrained by Example, or Shame, or Fear, or even by Conscience: Good Men are thereby doubly Edified; since on the one hand this Rigour confirms them in their Duty, and that on the other hand, it makes reparation for the Scandal which other Mens Sins give them.

From all this, I conclude, that Discipline is a Sacred, Necessary and Inviolable Order. It cannot be said, that it is a Humane, or Arbitrary Establishment, which may be altered, or which was only to continue for a time. An Order which has its Original in the express Laws of Christ and his Apostles, and which is appointed in Scripture as a general Law; an Order which has been observed in the Primitive and Apostolical Church; an Order which is founded upon the very Nature of the Church and Religion, and which perfectly agrees with the Spirit of the Gospel; such an Order certainly ought to be followed, as being of a necessary and indispensable obligation. I say it again, there is nothing more positive than this in the Institution of the Sacraments, Discipline as well as the Sacraments, is founded upon Divine Institution, and confirmed by the practice of the Primitive Church; but in Discipline there is one thing more than in the Sacraments; for whereas the Sacraments considered in themselves, and without respect to the

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Divine Institutions, are things indifferent and of no use; Discipline in it self is just and useful, agreeable to the Principles of Christianity as well as to plain reason and sense. Cause II.

I have perhaps been too large upon this Subject, but it was to be proved in the first place that Discipline is necessary and instituted by God, since that is the ground I go upon in this whole Chapter.

This Sacred Order which had been settled in the beginnings of Christianity was altered in process of time; And in this as in many other things Christians grew remiss, This was done by degrees; for good Laws are not commonly abolished all at once, but through insensible changes. We learn from Ecclesiastical History, that the slackning of Discipline, is chiefly to be imputed to the taking away some publick Penances. Those Penances were converted into private Confessions and Penances. At first this alteration was only concerning some Sins, which were not thought to deserve the utmost rigor of Discipline; for as to great Sins, such as Murder and Adultery, the Ancient Order was still in force. But at last about the end of the IV Century Publick Penances were Abolished, first in the Eastern, and sometime after, in the Western Churches. Instead of Penances, private Satisfactions were appointed, and then Men unhappily began to be more concerned about the exterior of Penance, than about what is Spiritual in it, and fit to reclaim Sinners. This was done at first II.

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Part II. by a kind of Relaxation or Indulgence; but that which at the beginning was no more than an exception to the Law, ſucceeded in the room of the Law it ſelf; and from thence ſprang Indulgences, Satisfactions, Penance, Auricular Confeſſion, and many other Practices, which are but Corruptions of the Ancient Diſcipline. The Biſhops on the other hand being diſtracted by temporal Cares, after the Converſion of the Emperors to the Chriſtian Religion, began to neglect the eſſential parts of their Function, and the Conduct of their Flocks. They were for humouring great Men, who thought it hard to ſubmit to the publick Order. This is a ſhort account, how the purity of the Chriſtian Religion was conſiderably adulterated in the point of Diſcipline.

III. We are now to examine what the preſent State of the Church and Religion is, with relation to Diſcipline. All the abuſes which came up in the room of the Ancient Diſcipline, do ſtill ſubſiſt in moſt places, both in the Greek and in the Latin Church. The Canons and Laws of the Church in the firſt Centuries have been abrogated by contrary Laws and Canons. This is acknowledged by all Men of Learning and Sincerity.

Let us ſee then whether this Diſcipline is to be found any where elſe. There are many Churches in the laſt Age, which did redreſs thoſe Abuſes I now mentioned. But they ought to have gone further; as theſe Abuſes had ſucceeded in the room of Apoſtolical Diſcipline,

ipline, so that too should have been restored, when these were taken away. But this was ot done as it might have been wished. The Disorder was removed, but Order was not re-stablished; and it is not hard to apprehend ow this came to pass. Cause II.

It is no wonder that those Abuses should e taken away; they were grown too intole-able; and they could not hold out against he Learning of an Age more knowing than he former were. Things were gone so far, that Turn and a Revolution were necessary. It is ery probable besides, that Interest, Pride, or Ambition, did move great numbers of Persons, who after all had not much Piety, to set them-elves against those many and great Disorders, nd to shake off a Yoke under which the Chri-tian World then groaned. But the same Prin-iples hindred them to submit to the Yoke of Christ, and to bind themselves to the observa-ion of Evangelical Discipline. We are to con-ider further, that the Rules of Discipline and Penance had been disused for several hundred Years, so that it was not easy to bring the World to submit to an Order, of which the No-ion was lost. Policy had perhaps a large share likewise in this Revolution. Princes and great Men were easily determined, to pull down the excessive and usurped Authority of the Cler-y, but they did not all express the same Zeal to restore to the Church, her Lawful Au-hority. In fine, among Divines themselves, here were many who could not endure that

Discipline

Part II. Diſcipline ſhould be named, and who diſpu
ted and writ again thoſe, who were for ex
cluding ſcandalous Perſons from the Holy Sa
crament, and for making uſe of excommunica
tion and Publick Penances. In ſuch Circum
ſtances the reſtoring of Diſcipline was a har
Task. It will not be improper to relate her
concerning this matter, the Opinions and th
very Words of thoſe who were the
imployed about the Reformation of th
Church.

They looked upon Diſcipline as a Capita
Point to reſtore Religion to its purity. The
wrote * *That Diſcipline was the Beſt, nay th
ONLY MEAN to keep the People in Obedi
ence; That the Church would never ſtand upon
firm and ſolid foundation, till Diſcipline and Ex
communication were uſed to purge it, to give
ſtop to Licentiouſneſs, to baniſh Vice, and to men
Manners, and that whoſoever did reject the law
ful and moderate uſe of Excommunication, ſhewed
himſelf by that to be none of Chriſt's Sheep.*

But we do likewiſe obſerve in their Wri
tings, that they had the ill fortune, of not be
ing able to ſucceed in their deſign, they ſay o
penly, that they met on all hands with inſupe

* *Calvini Epiſt. & Reſponſa.* Pag. 337. Diſciplinam jure vo
care poſſumus optimum, atque adeò unicum retinendæ obedi
entiæ vinculum. *Et paulò poſt.* Itaque Eccleſias noſtras tum de
mum ritè ſuffultas arbitrabor, ubi iſto nervo colligatæ fuerint
Et pag. 336. Cæterùm non aliter conſiſtet Eccleſiæ incolumitas
quam ſi ad eam purgandam, frænandas libidines, tollenda fla
gitia, Corrigendos perverſos mores, vigeat Excommunicatio, cu
jus moderatum uſum quiſquis recuſat, Præſertim admonitus, ſe
ex Chriſti ovibus non eſſe prodit.

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rable Obstacles. * *That there was a company of Ministers, who preached a Gospel without Discipline, and who even questioned, whether the use of Discipline was to be brought back into the Church: That some introduced Licentiousness instead of Christian Liberty, and thought that to reject the Pope was enough in order to be truly Evangelical: That others observing the daily decay of Christianity, wished that the Authority of the Ministry might be restored, but that either they did not see the true way of bringing this about, or that if they saw it they despaired of success: That those who endeavoured to revive Discipline were called Tyrants, who would have usurped the Liberty of the Church: That the People had shaken off all restraint, and were accustomed to Licentiousness; as if by taking away the Pope's Authority, the Ministry had been destroyed, and the Word of God and the Sacraments had lost their efficacy.* They have said, that the want of Discipline did produce Corruption. Cause II.

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* *Capito in Calv. Epist.* p. 7. Peritiores rerum Ecclesiasticarum, cernunt in Causâ (ejectionis vestræ) fuisse totam Cohortem Ministrorum, Evangelium docentium sine Disciplinâ, imò ne scientium an Disciplina sit in Ecclesiam revocanda. Otiosam enim functionem quidam tueri malunt, quam fructuosam: Quidam licentiam pro Christi libertate induxerunt, quasi ab Evangelio stent, qui jugum Pontificium abjecerint. Aliqui verò id est, plerique omnes, animadvertentes rem Christi indies abire in pejus optarent quidem restitutam auctoritatem Ministrorum, sed aut veram ejus reparandæ rationem ignorant, aut eam videntes desperant prorsus. *Et paulo post:* Auditis enim Tyranni esse voluistis in liberam Ecclesiam, voluistis novum Pontificatum revocare, atque id genus Contumeliarum, &c. *Et paulo post:* Nam frænum prorsus excussit Multitudo, quæ assueta est & educata propemodum ad Licentiam, quasi authoritatem Pontificiorum frangendo, vim verbi, Sacramentorum, & totius Evangelii evacuaremus, &c.

* *That*

Part II. * *That becauſe there were neither Cenſures, nor Corrections, nor Penances, nor Excommunications in the Church, even for the greateſt Crimes, the People and Youth, did commit all manner of Sins: That no Perſon was reſtrained by ſhame, and that Men became proud and altogether impenitent: That if the more odious Sins, were expiated by Penance and a reaſonable ſeverity, as St.* Paul *enjoyns, and as it was anciently practiſed, there would be leſs Corruption and more Zeal in the Church.*

Theſe were the Sentiments of many Doctors in the laſt Age; they ſaw that the want of Order and Diſcipline, was going to bring Libertiniſm into the Church. But yet their endeavours were not altogether uſeleſs. Some Churches drew conſiderably nearer to the Apoſtolical Inſtitution, and there are ſome where Diſcipline is not yet quite Aboliſhed: They ſtill make uſe of ſome part of thoſe means preſcribed by the Goſpel for the Correction of Manners: They do not admit all Perſons indifferently to the Sacrament: They retain the uſe of Publick Penances, and even, in ſome places, of Excommunication. But yet there are

* Bucerus de animarum cura, p. 171. Et quis negare poteſt, cum omnium peccatorum, quam atrocia etiam illa ſint, adeo nulla increpatio, caſtigatio aut pœnitentia eſt in Eccleſia, hinc fieri ut juventus & plebs eo leviores reddantur ad omne malum. Pudor & dedecus abeunt, homines efferuntur, redduntur (ut Paulus conqueritur) Omnino impœnitentes; dedunt ſe libidini, omnique vanitati; denique vita iſta petulanti atque perdita ſatiari nullo modo poſſunt.

Idem. p. 189. Si craſſiora delicta ſeveriore pœnitentia compenſarentur, ut ſanctus docet Apoſtolus, utque in ſancto atque ſalutari uſu fuit in Eccleſiis veteribus bene conſtitutis: Major inde apud omnes Dei Filios peccatorum fuga & deteſtatio, majorque vitæ Chriſtian Zelus exiſteret, quam proh dolor! hodie apud nos deprehendimus. *Vide & Buceri Epiſtolam ad Calvinum, in Epiſtola Calvini.* pag. 370 & 371.

ſtill

ſtill many things wanting in the Order and Government of thoſe Churches, as will appear by comparing their preſent practice with that of the Primitive Church, and with the Canons of the Ancient Diſcipline. I do not pretend that in this matter the practice of the firſt Chriſtians ought to be copied in every thing, but certainly in many Points we ought to conform to it. Cauſe II.

If we examine in what manner Diſcipline is adminiſtred now a-days, we may obſerve ſeveral Defects in it which are very conſiderable. For inſtance, we ſhall find Churches where Excommunication is us'd about Matters of no great importance; where that which is called Excommunication, is rather a civil Sentence or Puniſhment, than an Eccleſiaſtical Cenſure, and where, not the Paſtors of the Church, but civil Judges Excommunicate. Another common Fault is, that Diſcipline is exerciſed only upon two or three ſorts of Sinners; Fornicators and Notorious Blaſphemers are indeed ſeverely proceeded againſt, but a great many Perſons are ſuffered in the Church, who have nothing of Chriſtianity in their Deportment; ſuch as Drunkards, idle People, and ſeveral other Sinners; whom the Divine Laws ſubject as much to the rigour of Diſcipline, as Adulterers. It would be altogether Neceſſary to uſe Diſcipline againſt thoſe who enter into Marriage only to conceal their ſhame, and yet in moſt Churches no ſatisfaction is demanded of ſuch People: This is a matter of very great moment. There is no ſufficient care taken, to

Part II. be ſatisfy'd about the ſincerity of Sinners Repentance, when they are to be reſtored to the peace of the Church. The Apoſtolical Precept about avoiding all familiar intercourſe with Scandalous Sinners, is out of uſe. By all this we may ſee, that few Churches can boaſt of a pure Diſcipline. But ſuppoſing that true Diſcipline might be found in ſome places, yet how many defects do creep into the beſt Conſtituted Churches, either through the ſtubbornneſs of Sinners, the oppoſition of corrupt Magiſtrates, or through the fault and careleſneſs of Paſtors? The beſt Laws are good for nothing when they are not obſerved, ſo that whether thoſe, who ought to exerciſe Diſcipline for the giving a ſtop to Scandals, do it not, or whether they have not the power to do it, it is ſtill true that Corruption proceeds from the want of Diſcipline.

What muſt we ſay then of thoſe Churches, where Diſcipline is wholly unknown? where neither Church nor Paſtors have any Authority to govern or inſpect; where Miniſters dare not exclude any one from the Sacrament, but admit all Perſons indifferently to the Holy Communion; which Abuſe would have been thought an unheard of Profanation in the Primitive Church; and where all publick Penances are out of Doors? I ſay nothing of Excommunication; if any Man ſhould propoſe the reſtoring of it, his deſign would be look'd upon in many places as an unpardonable Crime: And the ſtrangeſt thing of all, is, that

that this want of Dicipline, is to be found in Churches, which acknowledge the Scripture for the Rule of Religion; and that there are Divines, who instead of promoting the re-establishment of Discipline, oppose it, and maintain that none are to be debarred from the Sacrament; who cannot endure the very name of Excommunication, and who pretend that where the Magistrate punishes Vice, there is no need of any other Discipline. Those Divines have not the greater number on their side, but their Opinion prevails, because it favours Policy and Licentiousness. Cause II.

We are to impute to this fatal Remisness, the looseness and irregularity of the Manners of Christians. I need not insist more upon this, for every one is sensible of it. Good Order keeps Men in Duty, but where there is no Order, Vice must of necessity bear sway. What should restrain People? Excepting some general Admonitions which are delivered in Sermons, every Person is left to himself, and lives as he thinks fit. Private Men are not bound to give an account of their Conduct to any body. Those who lead the most Unchristian Life, Swearers, Covetous, Profane, Lewd and Intemperate Persons, all sorts of People, live peaceably in the Church; they are reputed Members of it, they are mingled among true Christians, they enjoy with them the same Spiritual Privileges, at least in all outward appearance, and they are admitted to the same Sacraments. As long as Things are in this state; we must

Part II. not hope to ſee any abatement of Corruption.

But that nothing may be omitted which may contribute to the clearing of this matter, it is neceſſary to anſwer ſome Objections, and that which is alledged to excuſe, or even to juſtify the taking away of the Ancient Diſcipline.

1. Againſt the reſtoring of Diſcipline, ſome ſay, (which was objected in the laſt Age) *That it is ſufficient for the Edification of the Church, that the Goſpel ſhould be Preached in it; ſince that is the ordinary means which God has appointed to procure the Converſion and the Salvation of Men.* The Goſpel no doubt, is ſufficient to Teach us, all that is neceſſary to be known in Religion; but it is not true, that God makes uſe only of the Preaching of the Goſpel, for the Salvation of Men: For he uſes other Means beſides, as for inſtance, the Sacraments; and thoſe Means, among which Diſcipline is to be reckoned, are preſcribed by the Goſpel it ſelf; ſo that whoſoever ſubmits to the Goſpel, muſt likewiſe ſubmit to that Order we ſpeak of. But further, the Goſpel barely Preached and known is not ſufficient to Salvation; nothing but the practice of the Goſpel can Save a Man, and it is to little purpoſe to preach it, if the Manners of Chriſtians are not regulated, and if Diſcipline is not uſed to that end, as a Mean appointed of God. As to Preaching it will be ſhewn in the next Chapter, That Men aſcribe more efficacy to it than it has, and that there is a miſtake in the Opinion which they commonly entertain of it. 2. Thoſe

2. Thoſe who are for Myſtical Devotion and Piety will certainly ſay, *That Diſcipline is not eſſential to Religion, that it is a matter of external Order, and that external things are uſeful only to carnal and imperfect Chriſtians.* But I deſire thoſe who have ſuch Opinions, to ſpeak more reverently of an Order of which God is the Author, and which the Apoſtles have ſo expreſly recommended. It cannot be thought that the Apoſtles, who did aboliſh the Moſaical Ceremonies, would at the ſame time have burdened the Church with needleſs Laws, or that they would have interpoſed Chriſt's Authority, for the obſervation of an Order, which had not been neceſſary. They are deſired to conſider beſides, That Men have Bodies as well as Souls; that among a great multitude, there are many Perſons of a groſs Underſtanding, who cannot be reſtrained but by external Laws; and that it is abſurd to pretend, that Men can be ſo Spiritualized, as to need no longer outward Aids to Piety. But it is a groſs Error to look upon Diſcipline, as an Order purely external: For properly ſpeaking it is an Order altogether Spiritual. Diſcipline does not touch either Men's Bodies or their Eſtates, it uſes only Spiritual means, and it is efficacious no farther, than as it operates upon the Heart and Conſcience. Cauſe II.

3. But others will caſt the Objection I have now Confuted into this form; they will ſay, *That in external things, among which Diſcipline is to be ranked, Churches are at liberty to Regu-*

Part II. *late themſelves as they think good.* I grant that Churches have that Liberty in indifferent things, which are not appointed by a Divine Authority, but this cannot be applied to the Matter in Hand. An Eſtabliſhment of Divine Inſtitution cannot be reckoned among things indifferent. Do we look upon the Sacraments as indifferent Ceremonies, which we are not bound to obſerve, under pretence that they are but External Rites and Ordinances? Churches indeed have a Liberty where there is no Law, tho' ſtill that Liberty is to be wiſely and diſcreetly uſed, for fear of Confuſion; but when God has ſettled an Order, Churches are not at liberty to chuſe another, to make new Laws and to ſet up a new Form of Government. Such a Liberty would be meer Unrulineſs, and a criminal and ſacrilegious Preſumption. This would be the way to multiply Sects and Religions infinitely.

4. The ſame Anſwer may ſerve to Refute ſuch, who to juſtify the Practice of thoſe Churches, which do not obſerve the form of Diſcipline uſed in the Primitive Church, make a diſtinction between Diſcipline and the manner of exerciſing it. They own *that Diſcipline is neceſſary, and that there ought to be Order in the Church; but they think that the way of exerciſing Diſcipline may vary, according to Time, Place, and other Circumſtances.* This Diſtinction may be received, when the Caſe is only about ſome indifferent Circumſtances, but it is alledged without Reaſon, when the queſti-

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on is concerning the ſubſtance or the Eſſence of the thing it ſelf. The Diſorder we complain of, is, That what is eſſential in Diſcipline has been taken away, to ſubſtitute in lieu of it, another Order, and to ſet up a new Diſcipline of which the Apoſtles did not ſpeak a word. Now that which is moſt eſſential in Diſcipline, and which is not obſerved in moſt Churches, is this, That Scandalous Sinners are not to be ſuffered in the Church; and yet they are ſuffered: That they are to be warned and reproved in private, and even in publick; this is ſeldom done, and in ſome Places it is never done: That Chriſtians ought to ſeparate themſelves from thoſe who live diſorderly; and this is not obſerved: That upon certain occaſions, they are to be cut off from the Body of the Faithful; but Paſtors dare not ſo much as mention this: That the Adminiſtration of Diſcipline belongs to Paſtors; that they ought to preſide, proceed and judge in all emergent Caſes; the Scripture gives them that Right, and aſcribes to them thoſe Offices; but they have been deveſted of them, new Political Bodies have been Erected, in which there is but one Church-man, or two for form's ſake, who often have neither Vote nor Authority in them. It is of Divine right that Sinners ſhould give real Proofs of their Repentance, as for Inſtance, by making Reſtitution, by Reconciliations, by acknowledging their fault; but this is not now required of them; nay, in ſome Church-

Cauſe II.

Part II. es it is not ſo much as enquired into. It is a-gainſt all the Laws of Diſcipline, That none ſhould be excluded from the Holy Communion, and yet in moſt Places this is not regarded. Laſtly, it is an Apoſtolical Order and Practice, That Sinners ſhould be received to the Peace of the Church, but 'tis after they have fitted themſelves for it, by a ſincere, and if the Caſe requires, by a publick Repentance; but now a-days thoſe ancient Rules of Diſcipline are aboliſhed.

After all this, can it be ſaid that no alteration has happen'd in the eſſence of Diſcipline, but only in the manner of it? Cenſures, Suſpenſions, Excommunication and the Authority of Paſtors are taken away; the Government appointed by the Scripture is overturned, another and quite different Form is brought into the room of it; and yet People will ſay, that the Queſtion is not about the thing it ſelf, but the manner! It is not ſufficient to have any kind of Order; the Order which God has preſcribed, and no other, ought to be obſerved. Some Circumſtances may be varied according to the neceſſities of Churches, but the ſubſtance of the thing it ſelf is unalterable.

5. Many are of Opinion, That the Authority of the Magiſtrate ſupplies the want of Diſcipline, and that this way is by much preferrable to the other. I confeſs, that the Puniſhments inflicted by the Magiſtrate upon Scandalous Livers are of great uſe; that Magiſtrates who uſe their Authority to ſuppreſs Vice

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are very commendable, and that Discipline is of much greater force, when it is supported by the Authority of Civil Powers. But still the Divine Institution is to be preserved intire; it does neither belong to the Magistrate, nor to any Power to alter that which God has Commanded, and to deprive the Church of her Right. After all, the Discipline of the Magistrate is not the Discipline of the Church; these are two distinct things and of a quite different Nature. The Magistrate uses external and corporal Punishments; Fines, Imprisonments, Banishments, Force, *&c.* These Methods are certainly useful, they may terrify Sinners, and in some respects keep them in Awe and Duty: But besides this, it is necessary to work upon the Heart, and to bind the Conscience by those Methods which Discipline uses, or else it is to be feared, that we shall only make Hypocrites, and that Men will abstain from Evil more out of the fear of Punishment, and upon temporal Considerations than from motives of Conscience. Cause II.

Nay there are People, who if they had nothing to fear but a Fine, or some Days Imprisonment, would gladly purchase at that rate the liberty of sinning, and fancy that provided, satisfaction be made to the Magistrate, there is no more to be done for the clearing of their Conscience. Besides, what a disorderly thing is it, that an Offender who is prosecuted, fined, and imprisoned by the Magistrate, should still be treated like a Member of the

Part II. the Church, and admitted to the Holy Sacrament? The Magiſtrate's Authority is therefore a very efficacious Mean to promote the Glory of God, when it is joyned with Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline; but to think that Civil Laws are ſufficient to Regulate Manners and to reclaim Sinners, is a Conceit almoſt as unreaſonable, as it would be ridiculous, to proceed againſt Robbers, or the other Diſturbers of the publick Peace, only by Spiritual Puniſhments. Let no Man then confound thoſe things which God has ſet aſunder.

6. It is farther ſaid, *That theſe Rules of Diſcipline were only for a time, and that the times are altered.* But how can it be proved, that the Laws of Diſcipline were made only for a time? Is there any ground for this either in the Scripture, or in the Nature of thoſe Laws? Are the Laws of Diſcipline like thoſe of *Moſes*, which do no longer bind us? Did the Apoſtles make this diſtinction? Did St. *Paul* ſay upon this Subject, as he did in another Caſe, * *I only give my judgment; I have no Commandment of the Lord?* Does he not ſpeak poſitively of the Order according to which the Church is to be Governed? Does he not Command in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt? Does he not eſtabliſh general Laws and Maxims for all the Churches? The Apoſtles indeed appointed ſome Rules, the obſervation of which is not neceſſary at this Day, becauſe thoſe Re-

* 1 Cor. VII.

gulations

gulations were visibly founded upon particular Reasons, which do no longer subsist, and therefore they are not proposed as general Laws. But the Reasons upon which Discipline is founded, and which are taken from Order and Edification, from the Honour of the Church, from the Conversion of Sinners, and from the Nature of the Christian Religion, those Reasons do still subsist; and consequently the Rules of Discipline are Sacred and Inviolable, especially being delivered by way of Command, and repeated in so many Places. The Christian Church is to be Diffused all the World over, sometimes She is Persecuted, and sometimes She enjoys a Calm; but whatever State She may be in, her Nature does not alter. As there is but one God, one Church, one Faith, one Baptism; so there is to be but One Order, at least as to Essential Things, and that Order ought to be conformable to the Laws of the Apostles. Or else there will be, as in fact we see there are as many different Customs and Disciplines, as there are Kingdoms, States, Provinces, nay Towns and Churches.

Cause II.

7. It is commonly objected, *That the Zeal of the Primitive Christians is extinct, that Men are now very Corrupt, and that it would be impossible to bring them to a submission to the Discipline of the Church.* But that very thing that Men are corrupt, proves the Necessity of Discipline. Order is never more necessary than when a

Part II. is in Confusion, * St. *Paul* says, *that the Law is not made for a righteous Man, but for the Lawless and Disobedient.* Discipline seems more necessary now, than it was in the first Centuries; because then Persecution kept Corruption out of the Church, but when the Church is in peace, Vices and Scandals do infallibly multiply; and then it is, that good Discipline is of excellent use.

But then it is said, *that it would be impossible to restore it, considering the Disposition Men are now in.* I confess this design would meet with opposition. Those who go about to restore Order and suppress Licentiousness, must still encounter difficulties; but yet this might be compassed, if Princes and Magistrates did not oppose it. If all the Pastors did set about it, with a Zeal accompanied with Prudence and Gentleness; if they did carefully instruct the People concerning the necessity of Discipline; and if they did apply themselves to the Civil Powers with equal vigour and respect; they would carry the point at Last. After all, the People are not in a worse dispositon than the Heathens were in, before the Apostles preached the Gospel to them; and there are Christian Princes and Magistrates who have Piety and Zeal. If then the Heathens of old could be brought under the Discipline of Christ, in the sight of Heathen Magistrates, should we despair of subjecting Christians to

* 1 Tim. I. 9.

it?

it. The instance of those Churches where Discipline is observed, at least in part, and where Excommunication and publick Penances are in use, shews that there is no impossibility to succeed in this design. If the thing was impossible, God would never have commanded it

Cause II.

8. In the last place, here is an Objection which is commonly urged with great force, and which seems to have much weight in it. It is said, *That we have reason to fear that Discipline would bring Tyranny into the Church, and that those who govern it, would then assume too much Authority.* Let us see whether this Fear be well grounded.

And First, if we suppose this Principle, That Discipline is instituted of God, and that the Apostles did commit it to the Church and her Governours, which I think has been fully demonstrated, will it not be a kind of Blasphemy, to say, That Discipline is not to be suffered, lest Pastors should become Tyrants? Would not this reflect upon our Saviour and his Apostles, as if they had established a dangerous Order, which is apt to introduce Tyranny? At this rate the Apostles and the Primitive Christians, did incroach upon the Liberty of the People, and the Authority of Princes. Every Christian will abhor this Consequence, and yet it results naturally from the opinion of those who reject Discipline for fear of Tyranny. Besides, supposing that Christ has instituted the Order we speak of, can we thus

Part II. thus argue againſt it, without ſhaking off his Yoke? But Men do not conſider this. They fancy that every thing that is granted to the Church is granted to her Governours, whereas they ſhould remember that it is paid or yielded to Chriſt, whoſe Right it is, and who cannot be deſpoiled of it without Sacrilege. Here we might retort the Charge upon thoſe who bring it. They talk of Tyranny, and is it not an intolerable piece of Tyranny, to oppoſe a Divine Law, and to debar the Church and her Governours of the enjoyment of thoſe Rights, which God had given them?

But to come cloſer to the Objection. Nothing can be feared but one of theſe two Inconveniences; either an Empire over Conſciences, or ſome Prejudice to the Publick Tranquillity, and to the Authority of Civil Powers.

As to the firſt of theſe two Inconveniences, there is no great reaſon to fear it; ſince the Apoſtles, who ſo expreſly recommend Diſcipline to Paſtors, forbid them at the ſame time to aſſume a Dominion over Conſciences. Provided Diſcipline is uſed only in thoſe caſes, and in that Manner which the Scripture appoints, and as it was practiſed by the firſt Chriſtians*, nothing like this is to be feared from it. The Diſcipline we ſpeak of, does not meddle with Points of Faith, and ſo Fear in this reſpect is groundleſs. As to thoſe Caſes which concern Manners, Injuſtice can hardly

* 1 Pet. V. 2. 2 Cor. I. 24.

be

be committed about them. The Church does not Judge of secret and unknown Facts. She only proceeds against Notoriously Scandalous and Impenitent Sinners, and she receives them, as soon as they express their Repentance; And is there any thing of Tyranny or danger in this? It is proper to observe here especially with reference to Excommunication, which is thought the severest part of Discipline, That when the Church proceeds to that extremity, she does not, properly speaking, act by way of Authority, as if she had an absolute power to punish a Sinner, and to cut him off from her Body: But that Sinner has already by his Life cut himself off from the Communion of Christ, he is no longer a member of the Church; so that the Church only declares that, which is done and determined already, tho' she should not declare it. Cause II.

Neither is there any Cause to fear that the Publick Peace should be disturbed by the exercise of Discipline. On the contrary, Society will be the better Regulated for it. For Discipline does not touch Civil Matters. Excommunication it self, does not hinder a Man from being still a member of the Common-wealth, nor that all the Duties of Justice and Humanity should be discharged towards him.

As for the Authority of Civil Powers, it is no ways injured by this, as evidently appears from the first Christians exercising Discipline openly in the sight of the Heathen Magistrates, without any opposition from them.

Part II. them. Chriſt did not come into the World to Erect a Temporal Kingdom, nor to draw Men off from their Submiſſion to the Authority of Kings and Magiſtrates. It is the Principle of a true Chriſtian. * *To tender unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's, and to God the things which are God's.* This Principle will not deceive a Man, and as long as we adhere to it, all things will be in order. Religion is ſo far from having any juſt umbrage to Princes, that on the contrary it ſtrengthens their Authority. Submiſſion to the higher Powers is recommended by the Apoſtles in the moſt earneſt manner. The Chriſtians of the firſt Ages, who were very ſtrict obſervers of Diſcipline, diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their Loyalty to Princes. Nay it is obſervable, That their Diſcipline which was ſo ſevere againſt Sinners, was as ſtrict againſt thoſe who were wanting in the Fidelity and Reſpect due to Superiours; witneſs that Canon, † which enjoyns the Depoſition of thoſe Biſhops and Clergy-men, who ſhould offer an Affront to the Prince or his Officers.

Whoſoever will take the pains to weigh this Matter, will acknowledge that Diſcipline is a diſtinct thing from the Civil Power. Each of theſe has its bounds and limits. The Church does not touch the Body nor Civil Matters, and it is not the Magiſtrate's buſineſs, to regulate things relating to Conſcience and Sal-

* Mat. XXII. 21. † Can. Apoſt. 84.

vation

vation. Indeed if Magistrates imagine, that they have a right to govern the Church as they think fit; and that they hold the same rank in it, which they hold in the Civil Society, so that the Ministers of Religion are but their Officers; Discipline may seem to them to lessen their Authority: But let those who entertain such thoughts, see how they can reconcile them with the Gospel, and with the Nature of the Christian Religion. Cause II.

Notwithstanding all this it will be said, that Church-men have been known to usurp a Dominion over Consciences and over Kings. It is true, Church-men have abused their Authority, but because a thing has been abused, is it therefore to be abolished? Wise Men will rather say, that things ought to be restored to their natural State and to their lawful Use. Else the whole Authority of Kings and Magistrates might be pulled down, and we might argue thus. Monarchical Government is liable to great Inconveniencies, Kings have been Tyrants and Usurpers, therefore there must be no more Kings. Magistrates and Judges have been unjust, Covetous, Cruel, and therefore no Magistrates are to be endured. Would not this argument be extravagant and impious? And yet the like Argument is used against Discipline. In Church as well as in State Government, there will be always some inconveniency to be feared; this Evil is almost unavoidable, there being no Form of Government which the Malice of Men may not

Part II. abuſe: But thoſe abuſes are without compariſon, a leſs Evil than Anarchy, which is the moſt dangerous State of all.

But let us clear the Matter of Fact, upon which the Objection I am now Confuting, is founded: It is ſuppoſed, that Diſcipline did introduce Tyranny; but on the contrary, it was upon the Ruins of Diſcipline, that Tyranny was erected. This is known to all thoſe, who have any knowledge of Antiquity. When did Biſhops and Clergy-men uſurp that exceſſive Authority, over Mens Eſtates, Perſons and Conſciences? It was when the Obſervation of the Ancient Diſcipline was ſlackned, when Diſcipline began to wear out of uſe, when Sinners, and eſpecially great Men, were exempted for Money, when that which ſhould have been tranſacted by the whole Church, was referred only to the Clergy, and when publick Confeſſion was changed into a private one. It was by theſe means, and not by the due Exerciſe of Diſcipline, that Churchmen made themſelves Maſters of all.

What we ought to do then is this, Firſt, to enquire what is of Divine Inſtitution in Diſcipline, and to reſtore that; in the next place to conſider what the Salvation of Sinners and the Honour of the Church require, and what was good and edifying in the practice of the Primitive Church, in order to conform to it; and laſtly, to provide by good Laws, that no Man may exceed the bounds of his Calling; particularly, that in reſtoring to the Clergy their

their lawful Authority, all just measures may be taken, to prevent their abusing it. If Christian Princes are bound to preserve the Rights of the Church, they ought likewise to take care that nothing be done against their own Authority, and to punish those who oppose it, or who disturb the Civil Society, whether Ecclesiasticks or Lay-men. This we are to treat of in another place. Cause II.

Besides, when we speak for the re-establishment of Discipline, we mean that Pastors should be subjected to it as well as their Flocks, and that if there is an Order in the Church to regulate the Manners of Christians, there should be one also to regulate the Clergy, and to lay strict Obligations on them to discharge their Duty in all its parts; And that according to the Ancient Practice, Discipline ought to be more severe, against the Ecclesiasticks who fail in their Office, than against the People. But as we have complained in this Chapter of the want of Discipline, with Relation to the Church in general, so we are going to shew in the next, that this want is neither less observable, nor less fatal, in those things, which concern the Governours of the Church.

I conclude with saying that in Order to remedy the Corruption of Manners among Christians, it is absolutely Necessary to restore the use of Discipline. This is what has been and is still heartily wished for, by many Persons of eminent Learning and Piety, and it is that which I desire all those who have a Zeal for

the Glory of God, to take into their serious Consideration.

CAUSE III.

The Defects of the Clergy.

IN searching after the Causes of the Decay of Piety, we cannot but enquire, Whether Corruption does not proceed from the Pastors and Governours of the Church. Pastors are appointed to oppose the Progress of Vice, and to be publick Fountains of Instruction, Edification and good Example; so that in truth their Ministry is of most excellent use, when duly exercised. But when Vice reigns, when Scandals multiply; that general Corruption is, if not a certain Proof, at least a strong Presumption, that there is some fault in Pastors.

If we would be satisfied about this matter, we need but reflect upon the Nature of their Office, and upon their way of discharging it. This is what I design to enquire into in this Chapter: In order to which, I shall consider. 1. What Functions and Duties are annexed to the Office of Pastors, And 2. What Qualifications are requisite in them to discharge it worthily.

I. There are two principal Functions incumbent on Pastors: Instruction and the Government of the Church.

1. It would be needless to prove that the Office

Office of Paſtors obliges them to inſtruct the People and to preach the Goſpel, for this is beyond all Queſtion. It will be fitter to obſerve, that the fruit of Publick Inſtructions deliver'd in Sermons, depends upon two things; the Matters treated of, and the Way of propoſing them; ſo that the Faults committed in Sermons are either in the Things themſelves, or in the Manner of handling them. Cauſe II.

1. The Matters handled in Sermons, are either of Doctrine or Morality. What has been ſaid in the firſt Chapter of this Treatiſe, may ſerve to diſcover to us the Defects in Preaching, with relation to theſe two Heads. Thoſe who preach the Goſpel do not ſufficiently inſtruct the People, neither in the Fundemental Doctrines, nor in the Duties of Religion: And as Catechiſing is properly deſigned for the explication of theſe Truths and Duties; I think Ignorance and Corruption chiefly proceed from this, That in moſt Churches, things are not well ordered, with referrence to Catechiſing. They are neither frequent enough, nor ſo proper for inſtruction as they ſhould be. Beſides, Catechiſing is almoſt every where neglected, if not deſpiſed. The common Notion is, that Catechiſms are only for Children and for the meaner ſort of People. The Function of a Catechiſt, which was anciently ſo conſiderable in the Church, is look'd upon now as a Function of no great importance, and it is uſually committed to Perſons of the leaſt Knowledge and Experience.

Part II. Theſe Faults might eaſily be remedied. One of the moſt uſeful Eſtabliſhments in Churches, would be to encreaſe the Number of Catechiſms, and to appoint them inſtead of the Sermon. But to render them more uſeful and more frequented, it would be neceſſary to eſtabliſh two ſorts of them. In thoſe of the firſt ſorts the Elements of Religion ſhould be explained in an eaſy and familiar manner, for the benefit of Children and of the leſs-knowing part of Chriſtians. The other ſhould be for thoſe who have attained a higher degree of Knowledge, and in theſe, Matters that had been propoſed but generally before, ſhould be more fully and exactly handled. But if it be thought that an Eſtabliſhment of this Nature, and that the multiplying of Catechiſings, might meet with Difficulty and Obſtructions, it would be neceſſary at leaſt, for the inſtruction of great numbers of Perſons, who never aſſiſt at thoſe Exerciſes, that Miniſters ſhould be obliged to preach upon the ſame Subjects, which are commonly treated in Catechiſms.

As for Sermons, the Church would reap more benefit from them, if Preachers did always ſhew true Judgment in the choiſe of the Matters they handle. We muſt not thing that all ſorts of Subjects are inſtructive alike, and that in order to Preach the Goſpel, it is enough to ſpeak of God in a Sermon, and to take a Text out of Scripture. Every Subject ought to be propoſed and preſſed according to its impor-

importance. To insist upon matters of lesser Moment, whilst those which it most concerns Christians to be Informed about are neglected, is to swerve from the true intendment of Preaching. But because all Preachers have not the Capacity to make this Choice, it would be fitting, that part of the Matter of their Discourses, should be appointed and prescribed to them by a Law. For when they are tyed to no Rule, when they are at liberty to Preach upon any Subject, which they think fit to chuse, it happens that many instead of handling the most imporant things in Religion, and of consulting the present State and Necessities of their Flocks, apply themselves to various Subjects which are of no great Edification. Cause II.

Preachers for the most part, consult only their own Inclination in the choice of their Matter; and when they pitch upon a Subject, it is rather because it pleases them, and because they apprehend a facility in treating it, than out of regard to the necessities of their Congregations. Those who are fond of Mysteries and Allegories, apply their time and studies to the Expounding of the Prophecies, and to the unfolding of the Types of the Old Testament. Those who are given to Disputing, fill their Sermons with nothing else but Controversy. And the same may be said of Speculative Divines, who are conversant in the Fathers and History, they entertain the People with those things which are

Part II. the ordinary Subject of their Mediations and Studies. I do not mean, that ſuch things ought never to be ſpoken of; they may ſometimes be touched upon, provided, this be done judiciouſly: But they have a ſorry Notion of Religion and Preaching, who make thoſe Matters their main Buſineſs, and fancy they have entirely fulfilled all the parts of the Goſpel Miniſtry, when they have Preached upon Types, or Controverſy.

What I have now ſaid, may be applied to the choice of Texts. * *All Scripture* indeed, as St. *Paul* ſays, *is profitable for Inſtruction*; that Divine Book contains nothing but what is uſeful; but yet the various uſefulneſs of the ſeveral parts of Scripture, is to be diſtinguiſhed, and it muſt be owned that ſome Places are more uſeful and inſtructive than others. Some difference is to be made between thoſe Books and Chapters, which explain the Doctrine of Redemption, the Deſign of Chriſt's coming into the World, or the Duties of a Chriſtian Life; and thoſe which ſerve only to acquaint us with the Order of Times, and to confirm the certainty of Hiſtory. Theſe laſt have their uſe, ſince the Truth of Hiſtory is one of the main Proofs of the Truth of Religion; but thoſe Places are more uſeful which Treat of what we are to believe or to do in order to Salvation. It is of another ſort of importance, to explain the Goſpel, than to Preach upon the Book of *Joſhua* or

* 2 Tim. III. 16.

Ruth,

Ruth, or upon ſome Places of the Prophets. I am not ignorant that ſome have thought, that the Scripture is equally Rich every where; that all Doctrines may be drawn from all Texts; that thoſe Chapters and Verſes which ſeem the moſt barren, and where there appears nothing extraordinary, contain Myſteries and Treaſures which might exhauſt even the Meditations of Angels; but this Conceit is ſo abſurd and repugnant to Senſe, that I do not think it worth my while to Confute it. Cauſe II.

Morals being ſo Eſſential a part of Religion, ſhould be very particularly inſiſted upon by Preachers, and yet few do it; ſo that Morality, of all things is that which is the moſt ſuperficially handled in the greateſt part of Sermons. This Fault in Preachers proceeds from ſeveral Cauſes. Some have a Prejudice againſt Morality, and think it ought not to be inſiſted on.

Others who are conceited with vain Learning, imagine that to Preach Morals, argues but an ordinary meaſure of Parts, and little skill in Divinity, and that it becomes them better to ſoar after high Speculations, and to dive into the Myſteries of Faith and of the moſt ſublime Theology. This cuſtom of inſiſting more upon Doctrine than Morals, proceeds alſo from another Cauſe, which is, that in this laſt Age Divines were fain to be continually Explaining and Diſputing; and ſo the ſame Method has been followed ever ſince.

Part II. I am apt to think besides, that many Divines neglect Morality, because the treating of it is more difficult, than the explaining Doctrinal Matters. Let those supercilious and speculative Divines say what they will, the right handling of Morality is the hardest thing in Preaching. It is easie to explain a Text, or a point of Doctrine; and a Man must be very meanly gifted, if with the help of a Commentary or a Common-Place, he is not able to do the feat, and to furnish out his hour. But to Preach Morals is quite another thing. I confess that there is a way of Preaching Morality which requires no great pains. If Men content themselves with delivering Moral Sayings concerning Vice and Virtue, this may be done without much labour. But when a Preacher pursues true Morality, when he is to master the Hearts of Men, to reform the Manners of a whole Congregation, to encounter the Inclinations of his Hearers, and to make them renounce their Passions and Prejudices; then it is that he meets with many and great difficulties; this is an inexhaustible Spring of Labour and Meditation, and a task which few Preachers care to take upon them.

In Religion, Doctrine should never be separated from Morality, nor one of these preferred before the other. But yet it is necessary to insist more upon Morality than upon Doctrine, not only because the design of our whole Religion is to make us good Men, but also because Morality cannot effectually be taught

taught without being much dwelt upon. It is only by enlarging on matters, and entring into many Particulars, that the two ends of Morality are to be attained, which are inſtructing Men in their Duty, and perſuading them to the practice of it. Cauſe II.

Morality is of a vaſt extent, as may appear by conſidering how many Duties are compriſed under theſe three Heads of Chriſtian Morals, Piety, Juſtice, and Temperance. Beſides theſe Duties which are common to all Men, there are ſome Particular ones relating to the different Conditions, Callings, Ages, and States which Men are in. And how many things are there to be conſidered upon all theſe Heads? This is not all, for theſe Duties vary infinitely, by reaſon of the diverſity of Circumſtances. There are almoſt as many different Diſpoſitions as there are Perſons among a great multitude of Men who are addicted to the ſame Vice; there are hardly two who are vicious in the ſame degree and manner. It is therefore requiſite that Preachers ſhould deſcend into particulars, and that they ſhould ſo characterize Duties, Vertues and Vices, that every one may know himſelf in the Deſcription.

And yet this relates only to bear Inſtruction. Now if in the next place we intend to engage Men to the Practice of theſe Duties, there new difficulties will ariſe, and no good Succeſs can be expected but from aſſiduous Care and conſtant Labour. There are in Man's Heart,

Part II. Heart, ſo many different Diſpoſitions and Motions, ſo many Illuſions and Prejudices, ſo many Windings and Artifices, that a very particular application is required for us to inſinuate our ſelves into it. When the Truths and Doctrines of Religion are to be Taught, things need not be ſo minutely handled, and there is no occaſion to uſe ſuch mighty Endeavours; nay, the being very particular may be a fault. He that would inſtruct, ſo he is clear, ſhould rather be ſhort than prolix. The Hearers do eaſily apprehend the Truths which are propoſed to them, and the moſt Corrupt Men are able to diſcern Truth from Error; a Libertine will find who is in the right or in the wrong, in a Diſpute. But it is not ſo eaſie a thing to touch the Heart, or to conquer inveterate Habits. What *Tully* ſays in his Dialogue of the Orator, deſerves to be inſerted here, it is this, * *Paſſions are not to be excited in a moment, as a Proof does preſently perſwade ſo ſoon as it is propoſed. A proof is confirmed by Reaſons, and Reaſons clearly ſet out, make an impreſſion immediately; but when we intend to raiſe the Paſſions, the ſucceſs does not ſo much depend upon the Conviction, as upon the Perturbation of the Mind; Oratory cannot have*

* *Cicero de Orat. Lib.* 2. Non enim ſicut Argumentum, ſimul atque poſitum eſt, arripitur, alterumque & tertium poſcitur; ita miſericordiam aut invidiam, aut iracundiam ſimulatque intuleris, poſſis Commovere. Argumentum, enim ipſa ratione Confirmat, quæ ſimul atque emiſſa eſt adhæreſcit. Illud autem genus Orationis, non cognitionem judicis, ſed perturbationem requirit, quam conſequi niſi multa, & varia, & copioſa, & ſimili Contentione orationis nemo poteſt. Quare qui aut breviter, aut ſummiſſe dicunt, docere judicem poſſunt, commovere non poſſunt.

its

its effects then, without Prolixity, Variety, Copiousness and Vehemence of Discourse. Those therefore who speak briefly and calmly, are fit to Instruct, but not to move. Cause II.

From these Reflections it appears, that the Method of those Preachers, who are large upon the Explication of Doctrines, and succinct upon Morals is, directly contrary to the true way of Preaching, and that those do very ill understand what Morality is, who either despise it, or look upon it, as the easiest thing in Preaching.

We may likewise apprehend from what has been said, what are the most ordinary Faults of Preachers when they treat of Morals. I shall observe Three of them. Their Morality is *too general*, it is *defective*, and it is sometimes *false*.

1. Many Preachers are *too General* in handling Morality. This is the Head which is the most slightly touched upon. They spend the greater part of their Sermons in explaining the Sense of a Text, they sift all the words, and examine all the Circumstances of it with the utmost Nicety. In a word, they drain the Subject. But when they come to the Application, they content themselves with two or three general Uses; they address to their Auditory some loose Exhortations to a good Life; even when they are to speak upon a Moral Subject, they confine themselves for the most part to general Considerations: Nothing is Particularized, or treated with the necessa-

Part II. neceſſary exactneſs. Now generalities are of no great uſe in Matters of Morality. To ſay in general Terms, that Men ought to be good, and to declaim againſt Senſuality, or Covetouſneſs, is that which will convince no Man. It is not bawling or ſending Sinners to Hell, that is likely to win upon them. It ſhould be diſtinctly ſhewn, what it is to be a good Man; Vertues and Vices ſhould be Characterized, and their various Kinds and Degrees obſerved; particular Rules ought to be given to the Hearers, they ought to be furniſhed with neceſſary Motives and Directions; we are to Confute their Miſtakes, and to obviate their Objections and Excuſes. Till we come to this, Preaching will be attended with little Succeſs.

2. The Moral Diſcourſes of Preachers are often *Defective*; for beſides that they handle Morallity in a ſuperficial Manner, there are ſome eſſential Articles which they ſeldom or never ſpeak of, among which we may reckon Reſtitution. The Moralities of Preachers turn almoſt together upon Four or five Heads; tack only ſome of the groſſer Sins, ſuch as Blaſphemies, Uncleanneſs, and ſuch other Vices. But this is to confine themſelves, to the firſt Elements of Piety and Morallity. True Morality goes a great deal further. Piety does not only baniſh the more heinous Sins; it does beſides fill the Heart with a ſincere love of Virtue; it ſoftens and rectifies the Inclinations, it produces in a Man, Gentleneſs

tleneſs, Humility, Patience, Reſignation to the Will of God, Divine Love, Tranquility under all Events, Charity towards other Men, and a Zeal for Juſtice and Goodneſs. This is the main of Piety, this is what ſhould be inceſſantly laid before Chriſtians, to make them apprehend the Extent and Perfection of the Morals of the Goſpel. Cauſe II.

3. The Moral Diſcourſes of Preachers are *Falſe*. 1. When they are too remiſs; 2. When they are too ſevere, And 3. When they are Contradictory. Their Morality is too remiſs, when it does not propoſe all the Duties of Holineſs in their full latitude, when it flatters Sinners, or does no ſufficiently awaken their Conſciences. It is over-ſevere, when it raiſes groundleſs Scruples in Men's Minds; when it repreſents as a Sin, that which is not really ſo; or when it makes a neceſſary Duty of any thing, which may be omitted without danger. Preachers likewiſe over-do things, in the Pictures they draw for Virtues and Vices. If they are to ſpeak of Covetouſneſs or forbidden Pleaſure, they ſtrive to make of theſe the moſt hideous Pictures they can; they paint out a Covetous or a Voluptuous Man as a Monſter, they affect the moſt lively Deſcriptions and Figures, and their Sermons are loaded with every thing that their Collections afford upon the ſubject. But all this is only noiſe, and ſo much Breath ſpend in vain. Such Morality does not hinder the Voluptuous or Covetous Man, from purſuing his ordi-

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Part II. nary courſe, it is rather apt to harden him in it; becauſe as he does not ſee himſelf in the diſmal Picture which is made of theſe Vices, ſo he thinks himſelf free from them, or at leaſt not very guilty of them, Laſtly, Preachers do ſomtimes deliver Contradictory Morals. Having not ſufficiently meditated upon the Principles of Religion and Morality, they run themſelves into Contradictions; they ſay one thing in one place, and the contrary in another; they lay down Principles which deſtroy the Conſequences they will draw from them, or they draw Conſequences which over-turn the Principles they have laid down.

II. The Faults I have hitherto obſerved, relate to the Matter of Preaching; thoſe which are committed in the manner are not indeed ſo eſſential, but yet they are important enough to deſerve ſome notice here.

It is to no purpoſe to preach pure Doctrine and good Morality, if this is not done in a proper way to inſtruct and to perſuade. The moſt important Truths loſe their force in the Mouth of a Man, who either cannot ſpeak of them in a ſuitable manner, or expreſſes them obſcurely. And ſo likewiſe the way of exhorting and cenſuring, is often the reaſon why Exhortations and Cenſures prove ineffectual. Either they are not accurate or convincing enough, or they are Cold and Languid, or they are not ſeaſoned with Prudence and Mildneſs; but are a kind of Fire, which has

has more of Anger and Indiſcretion, than of true Zeal in it, and which offends more, than it affects or perſuades the Hearers. Cauſe III.

Divers Conſiderations might be here inſiſted upon concerning the way of Preaching; but I think what is moſt Material to be ſaid on this Subject, may be reduced to this one thing; that the manner of Preaching is not Simple and Natural enough. The way of Preaching ſhould correſpond with the Deſign of Religion and Sermons, which is to inform the Underſtanding, and to move the Heart. This End is attained by thoſe, who think and ſpeak clearly and naturally, when every thing, in Reaſoning, Method, Stile, and Exterior, is regulated by Nature and true Senſe. But it has been obſerved long ago, that Preachers are particularly apt to fail in this reſpect. Falſe and confuſed Ideas, un-accurate Reaſonings, ſtrained or impertinent Reflections, forced and unnatural Expreſſions, are almoſt become the Property of that Order of Men. One would think that moſt Preachers take pains not to follow Nature; as if a Man was no ſooner in the Pulpit, but he muſt ſpeak no longer like the reſt of Mankind, as if the part of a Preacher was ſomething like that of a Prophet among the Jews. Nay this is paſſed into a Proverb; ſo that odd Ways and injudicious Reflections, are called Ways and Reflections of Preachers.

1. If Nature was conſulted, and if Men did conſider the end of Preaching, they would

Part II. ſee in the firſt place, that the Method which is followed by many, in the explaining of Scripture and the compoſing of Sermons, had need be reformed in ſome reſpects, and that it does not agree ſo well as it ſhould, with the ſimplicity of the Goſpel. For Inſtance, Why ſhould Time be waſted in Exordiums and Preliminaries? Why ſhould a Preacher dwell upon the explaining of Words and Phraſes which every Body underſtands, or upon preſſing the leaſt Circumſtances of a Text? What ſignify thoſe needleſs Digreſſions, thoſe Objections which no body thinks of, thoſe citations and ſtories, which in ſome Countries fill up Sermons, and ſo many other ſmall Niceties, which clog theſe kind of Diſcourſes. All this might be let alone, without prejudice to publick edification.

2. It is for want of Conſulting Nature, that Preachers are obſcure. Sometimes the Obſcurity of their Sermons ariſes from the things they ſpeak of, when they are obſcure in themſelves. But at other times this Obſcurity proceeds, from their not having diſtinct Ideas of the Subjects they treat. Their Stile and Language do alſo contribute much to make them dark. Some uſe Scholaſtical Words and Terms of Art, which are Arabick to the People; others delight in figurative and improper Expreſſions, which preſent falſe Ideas to the Mind. Now they might avoid all theſe Faults, if they did not forſake Nature and Simplicity. But ſome Preachers affect

fect the ſaying new and ſingular things, and they would be ſorry if they had made uſe of ſimple and common Ideas, Reaſonings and Expreſſions, which yet are the cleareſt and the beſt. Cauſe III.

3. Falſe Eloquence proceeds from the ſame Source. Preachers commonly aim at Eloquence; and it is to compaſs this End, that they take ſuch pains in the compoſing and delivery of their Sermons, and that they affect a Style, a Pronunciation and Geſtures, which become a Stage-player or a Prophane Orator, much better than a Miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt. I might remark here, that this affectation of Eloquence, is not very ſuitable to the Spirit of Piety, which ſhould animate a Clergy-man. But not to moralize upon this, I ſhall obſerve that theſe Preachers miſs their Mark, by making ſo much work, and by uſing ſuch mighty endeavours to hit it. True Eloquence, the force of a Diſcourſe, an elevated and ſublime Style, conſiſts in following Nature. Nothing admits of greater vehemence and loftineſs than the Subjects which Religion Affords. Let a Preacher be well acquainted with theſe, let him go about them in an eaſy and natural way, but eſpecially let him feel and be thoroughly affected with them; and he needs not trouble himſelf about any other Helps; he will deſpiſe all the falſe ſparkling, and the vain ornaments of inſiped and boyiſh Eloquence, and he will not be capable of ſpeaking like a Gramar Scholar, or a Declaimer.

Part II. All that which coſts Preachers ſo much Labour, flights of Wit, refined Thoughts, ingenious Deſcriptions, polite Language, all that I ſay, is very mean. By ſuch things they may raiſe at moſt a vain Admiration, but they will never Inſtruct nor Convert a Sinner. One Dram of good Senſe is worth more than all that.

4. Some Preachers run into another Extrem, their way of Preaching is neglected and courſe; they think to juſtify themſelves, by ſaying, that they are ſimple and popular, that they ſpeak naturally and without Art. But they ſwerve as much from Nature as the others, and as it is a Fault to be affected, it is another to be flat, homely and barbarous: It is as much againſt Nature, to uſe ridiculous and offenſive Geſtures, Tones and Ways, or to ſtand without Motion or Action in the Pulpit, as it is to play the Declaimer there.

I might add other Conſiderations about the manner in which the Goſpel ought to be Preached, but I ſhould engage too far in this Subject. We may judge now whether Ignorance and Corruption, do not proceed from the Defects of thoſe who Preach the Goſpel. The People have ſcarce any Notion of Religion, but what they gather from Sermons. If Sermons then are not Inſtructive and Edifying, either becauſe all the Truths and Duties of Chriſtianity are not propoſed in them, or becauſe they are ill propoſed, the People muſt of neceſſity be very much in the dark.

I shall say one Word more concerning the Instruction which Pastors owe their Flocks. Publick Instruction, how useful soever they may be, are not sufficient. The Edification of the Church requires, that upon certain occasions, Pastors should likewise instruct in Private. This necessity of Private Instructions, may be proved by the following Arguments. 1. If there be none but Publick Instructions, and Exhortations, what Instruction can a great many Persons receive, who either do not frequent, or do not hearken to Sermons? What will become of those who hear, but do not understand what they hear, or who understand it, but forget it presently, and so do not practise it? 2. All things cannot be said in Sermons, how particular soever they may be; yet still many things remain untouched. Nay, there are Matters which a Preacher cannot bring into the Pulpit. Can he enumerate all the Cases in which Injustice may be committed, or Restitution is to be made? Can he specify those infinite Frauds which are practised in Mens several Callings and Trades? Can all Cases of Conscience, about which the Hearers want instruction, be Decided in a Sermon? Dare we insist in the Pulpit upon the Head of Impurity? And may not this be one of the Reasons why that Sin is so common? If Christians then have no opportunity to be Instructed in Private about these Articles, they will be ignorant with relation to them as long as they live. 3. In order to good Instruction it

Cause III.

Part II. is neceſſary, that the Teacher and thoſe who are Taught, ſhould communicate their Thoughts to one another. For the Hearers may have their Doubts; they may ſomtimes be at a ſtand, by reaſon of ſomething which they do not know, or of ſome Difficulty which ſtarts up in their Minds. Some have been hearing Sermons for theſe Twenty or Thirty Years, who yet entertain Scruples and Doubts concerning the Fundamentals of Religion. If ſuch Perſons receive no other Information, they will not be moved by any thing, that is ſaid in Publick, but they will retain their Scruples to their dying Day.

All this ſhews that private Inſtruction is a part of the Paſtoral Care: And the practice of it would certainly be very uſeful, not only for the Edification of the People, but alſo to keep the Clergy from growing amiſs, and to make them more diligent in the diſcharge of their Office. For when they have nothing to do but to Preach Sermons, it is much to be feared; conſidering Mens Propenſion to Lazineſs, that they will become Negligent. It is therefore an unhappineſs, that private Inſtructions ſhould be almoſt out of uſe, and that their ſhould be ſo little Communication about Religious Matters, between the People and their Miniſters. We have no Inſtruction remaining, but what is delivered from the Pulpit; and that would not be ſufficient, even tho' Sermons were ſuch as they ought to be. But when private inſtructions are wanting,

and

and when Sermons are defective beſides, it is impoſſible but that the greateſt part of Chriſtians, being deſtitute of neceſſary Informations and Aids, muſt live in Corruption. Cauſe III.

II. The Second Function of Paſtors, which ſhould perhaps be named in the firſt place, is the Conduct and Government of the Church. Upon this I obſerve. Firſt, That thoſe do not underſtand the Nature of the Paſtoral Office, who confine it to Preaching. There was a time when Preaching was quite laid aſide, and when Church-men did only perform Divine Service. But now a-days in many Churches, the whole Miniſtry is placed in the Buſineſs of Sermons, and the Eccleſiaſticks are looked upon, not as Paſtors, but Preachers; as Men whoſe Office it is upon certain Days and Hours, to ſpeak in the Church. Preaching is without diſpute, a part of the Office of Paſtors. But it is a great miſtake to think, that God has appointed them only to Preach; for they are entruſted beſides with the Government of the Church, and this part of their Employment is at leaſt, as eſſential as Preaching. It is remarkable, that the Scripture ſpeaks of Paſtors in divers Places, and that the Titles it gives them, and the Functions it aſcribes to them, relate chiefly to the Government of the Church. This is implyed in the Name of Biſhops, Prieſts or Elders, Guides and Paſtors. St. *Paul* has writ concerning the Duties of the Miniſtry, if we examine what he ſays of the Functions of that Charge, and

of

Part II. of the Qualifications of thoſe who are to be admitted into it; we ſhall find that he is much larger upon the Government of the Church, than upon Preaching. To this purpoſe, the Epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus* may be conſulted.

But further, all Church-men are not called to Preaching. The Apoſtles diſtinguiſh their Functions; they tell us, * *That all are not Doctors, that all do not Interpret, that all do not adminiſter the Word, that all do not Teach and Exhort; that ſome are appointed to Inſtruct, to Exhort, and to Expound the Scriptures, others to Govern, and others to do works of Charity.* Tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe that there is nothing in this, which relates to the extraordinary Gifts conferred upon the firſt Miniſters of the Goſpel, and to the Order which was then obſerved; yet it is plain that theſe Places are to be underſtood, of the Gifts and Functions of ordinary Paſtors.

This is confirmed by the Practice of the Primitive Church. The principal and the moſt general Function of Paſtors then, was the Inſpection and Governing of the Church. Preaching was not neglected, but all Church-men were not Preachers, this Province was committed to thoſe who were fit for it. Would to God this Diſtinction was ſtill obſerved! The Church would be better governed, and the Goſpel better Preached than it is.

* See 1 Cor. XII. 4, 5, 6, 28, 29, 30. Acts VI. 2, &c. Rom. XII. 6, 7, 8. 1 Tim. V. 17.

There

There are Talents requisite to Preach the Gospel, which every Body has not, and others are necessary for the conduct of the Church; and all these Gifts seldom meet in one Person. If then no regard is had to different Gifts and Functions if without distinction every thing is committed to one Person, it is visible that the Church will be ill Edified. Besides that I have shewed in the first Chapter of this Second Part, that it is a dangerous Notion, which restrains the Ministry to Preaching. But to remove this Inconveniency it would be necessary, that a competent Number of Ecclesiasticks should be had in every Church. Cause III.

1. To express my Thoughts more particularly concerning the Office of Pastors, with relation to the Government of the Church; I observe, First, that Discipline is worn out of use, as I have shewn at large in a Chapter upon that Subject. It is true, that this Defect is not wholly to be imputed to Pastors. If they do not Govern the Church by a good Discipline, it is because they have been deprived of their Authority. Many of them are sensible of this Disorder and lament it: But what can they do when they Exercise their Ministry in Places where their Hands are tyed up, where they dare not refuse the Sacrament to an Adulterer, and where they should bring themselves into great troubles, and perhaps be Deposed, if they took upon them, to observe the Apostolical Discipline? They are forced then to confine themselves to Preaching

Part II. ing, which when it is not backed with Discipline, can never have that Effect which it would produce in conjunction with it. There was nothing left to Pastors but what could not be taken from them without abolishing the whole Ministry: All that remains is only Preaching and Administring the Sacraments. And yet for all that, a great part of the Clergy, may justly be charged with that Fault we complain of, and with that Corruption of the People which is a consequence of it; (since there are those among them, who oppose the restoration of Discipline, and look upon it as an indifferent Order; and others who are placed in Churches, where some Form of Discipline is left, render the Exercise of it ineffectual, either through Imprudence and excessive Severity, or through a shameful Remisness, and a cowardly Indulgence.

2. Besides the Publick, there is a Private Discipline, which consist in Inspecting the Lives of Private Persons, in Visiting Families, in Exhortations, Warnings, Reconciliations, and in all those other Cares, which a Pastor ought to take of those over whom he is Constituted. For neither general Exhortations, nor publick Discipline can answer all the Occasions of the Church. There are certain Disorders, which Pastors neither can, nor ought to repress openly, and which yet ought to be remedied by them. In such Cases Private Admonitions are to be used. The Concern of Mens Salvation requires this, and it becomes

comes the Pastoral Carefulness, to seek the straying Sheep, and not to let the Wicked perish for want of Warning. But these are Cares to which some Pastors do not so much as think themselves obliged; they content themselves with Admonishing Sinners from the Pulpit. There is very little Intercourse between Pastors and those who are committed to their Charge. Private Persons live without being accountable for their Conduct to any Body; and except they commit the greatest Enormities, they fancy no Man has a Right to enquire into their Actions. Nothing reaches them but Sermons, and these they mind as much, and as little as they please; this must needs produce Licentiousness. Cause III.

The visiting of sick and dying Persons, is one of the most important Functions of the Office of Pastors; but when it is not performed with exactness and zeal, it contributes as much as can be imagined to the keeping up of Security. Every one must needs see, of what Consequence this part of the Ministry is, if he considers that it is at the end of Life that we are to be judged, and that our eternal state depends upon the condition we dye in: And if we reflect at the same time upon what the Scripture tells us, * *that we shall receive in the World to come, according to the good or evil we have done in this*; we will easily apprehend, what Ministers ought to do, when they visit sick and dying Persons. Their

* 2 Cor. V. 10.

chief

Part II. chief buſineſs ſhould be, to diſcover what ſtate thoſe Perſons are in, that they may ſuit their Exhortations to it. Then is it that they ought to ſpeak to the Conſcience of Sinners, and to perſuade them by all poſſible Means, to examine their Lives, and the diſpoſition they are in, in reference to their Salvation. And when a Miniſter meets, as it happens too frequently, with ſick Perſons, who are engaged and hardned in vitious Habits, or whoſe Repentance may juſtly be queſtioned; it is then that he had need uſe all his Skill and Prudence, all his Zeal and Endeavours, to ſave Souls which are in ſo great danger. Upon ſuch occaſions both the Miniſter and the ſick Perſon, have need of Time, Leiſure and Freedom, and a haſty Diſcourſe or Prayer ſignifies nothing.

And now we may judge whether a Man diſcharges the Office of a Paſtor, who only in general exhorts dying Perſons to acknowledg themſelves miſerable Sinners, and backs thoſe Exhortations with Aſſurances of the Divine Mercy through Jeſus Chriſt, or who only reads ſome Forms of Exhortations and Prayers, as the Cuſtom is in ſome places. This method is fitter to lay aſleep than to awaken a guilty Conſcience; and this way of exerciſing the Miniſtry, overturns the Doctrine of a future Judgment, and moſt of the Principles of Religion. A Miniſter ſpeaks to a ſick Perſon of the pardon of his Sins, he exhorts him to leave the World with joy, he diſ-

courſes

courses to him of the Happiness of another Life, and fills him with the most comfortable Hopes; And perhaps this sick Person is a Man loaded with Guilt, a Wretch who has lived like an Atheist, who has committed divers Sins for which he has made no Satisfaction, who has not practised Restitution, who never knew his Religion, and who is actualy impenitent. Such a Man ought to tremble, and yet such Consolations from the mouth of his Pastor, make him think that he dies in a state of Grace. Cause III.

But if this way of visiting and comforting the sick, betrays them into security, it has the same effect upon the standers by, who when they hear the Consolations which are administred to Persons, whom every body knows not to have led very Christian lives; make a tacit Inference, that the same things will be said to them, and that their Death will be happy, whatsoever their past Life may have been.

Besides the want of Ability and Zeal, there are two things which hinder Pastors from discharging towards dying People, the importent Duties to which their Office obliges them: The one is, that commonly Pastors visit the Sick only in cases of extremity; and the other is, that they have too little communication with their Flocks, and no sufficient Knowledge of the Lives and Conduct of private Persons; so that being ignorant of the State and Occasions of the Sick, they cannot at the approach of Death, administer to them wholesom Counsels and Exhortations.

These

Part II. These I think are the most essential Defects of Pastors, both in the Instruction, and in the Government of the Church.

Having thus far treated of the Duties of the Pastoral Charge; I come now to consider those Qualifications, with which Pastors ought to be endued. And these are of two sorts: First, The Endowments of the Mind, by which I mean those Abilities and Talents, which are necessary for the Instruction and Conduct of the Church; and Secondly, the Qualifications of the Heart, by which I mean Probity and Integrity of Life.

1. No Man questions but that Abilities and Talents are requisite in those who exercise the Office of Ministers in the Church. First, Some are necessary for Preaching the Gospel, and for the right expounding of Scripture. Preaching requires a greater extent of Knowledge, than is commonly imagined. To Preach well, a Man should be well skilled in Languages, History, Divinity and Morality. He should be acquainted with Man's Heart, he should be of a Sagacious and discerning Spirit, and above all things he should have a true and exact Judgment; to say nothing of some other Qualifications, which are necessary to every Man who speaks in Publick.

Neither are these Endowments sufficient; particular Talents are requisite for the Conduct of the Church. To guide a Flock and to be accountable for the Salvation of a great number of Souls, is no small Charge, nor an Employ-

ployment which every body is fit for. A Man to whom the Government of a Church is committed, in whose Hands the Exercise of Discipline is lodged, whose Duty it is both to Exhort and Reprove both in publick and in private, and who ought to supply all the occasions of a Flock, and to be provided for all Emergencies; such a Man has need of a great deal of Knowledge, Zeal and Firmness, as well as of much Wisdom and Prudence, Moderation and Charity. That all these Qualifications are requisite in a Pastor, is evident from the Nature of his Office; and St. *Paul* teaches it, when he appoints that none shall be admitted to this Employment, but those in whom they are to be found. Cause III.

What Effect then can the Ministry have, when it is Exercised by Men who want these Qualifications, or perhaps have the quite contrary; who are ignorant, who know nothing in Matters of Discipline and Morality, who can give no account of a great many things contained in Scripture, and whose whole Learning is confined to a Commentary; who can neither reason true, nor speak clearly; who are either Indiscreet, Negligent or Remiss in the Exercise of their Office? But I do not wonder that these Qualifications are wanting in most Clergy-men. Vast Numbers who were not cut out for this Employment, aspire to it. And besides these Abilities are not to be acquired without Labour and Application. Now many Church-men are shamefully idle;

Part II. idle; they look upon their Profession as a mean to live easiy, so that declining the Duties of their Place, they content themselves with the Incomes of it. Those who are to Preach are more imployed; but their Sermons are almost their whole Business: Their Work consists for the most part in copying some Comentaries, and as soon as they have acquired a little Habit and facility of Speaking in Publick, almost all of them give over Study and Labour. We may almost make the same Judgment of those Ecclesiasticks, who tho' they Study hard, yet do not direct their Studies to the Edification of the Church. The Learning and the Studies of Divines, I speak of those chiefly who have Cure of Souls, is often vain, and of no use for the edifying of their Flocks. They apply themselves to things suitable to their Inclinations, and their Studies are but their Amusement, or their Diversion. Now he who neglects the Duties of his Calling, and pursues other Employments, differs very little from him who does nothing at all.

II. Probity is, not less necessary to Pastors, than Knowledge and Ability; and this Probity ought to have three degrees.

1. The first is, That Pastors give no ill Example, and that their Life be blameless. This is the first Qualification which St. *Paul* requires in those who aspire to this holy Office. * *Let a Bishop*, says he, *be blameless*; that is, his Manners ought to be such that he may not

* 1 Tim. III. Tit. I.

justly

juſtly be charged with any Vice, or give any Scandal. Then the Apoſtle ſpecifies the faults from which a Paſtor ought to be free; *Not given to wine, no ſtriker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient; not a brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth well his own houſe, having his children in ſubjection with all gravity, and who is not liſted up with pride and ſelf-conceit.* Cauſe III.

Every body knows how much might be ſaid, if the Conduct of Clergy-Men was to be examined upon all theſe Heads. Are not many of them ſcandalous by the irregularity of their Manners? How groſs and ſhameful ſoever the ſin of Drunkenneſs may be, yet do they never commit it, and is not this Vice very common among them in ſome Countries? Are not ſome of them furious and paſſionate in their Actions and Words? Do we never obſerve in them a ſordid Covetouſneſs, and an exceſſive ſtudy of Self-Intereſt? Are their Families always well ordered? Are not Poſitiveneſs and Pride very remarkable in ſome Perſons of that Profeſſion? Is there not often juſt Cauſe to complain, that they are implacable in their Hatred, that they have little Charity; and that there is leſs Prepoſſeſſion, and more of Gentleneſs and true Zeal to be found among Lay-Men, than among Divines? I ſay nothing of ſome other Faults which are not leſs ſcandalous in Church-Men; as when they are given to Swearing, when they are diſſolute and undecently free in their Words, when they are wedded to Divertiſements and

Part II. Pleaſures, Worldly-minded, Lazy, Crafty, Unjuſt and Cenſorious.

When ſuch Vices appear in the Lives of Clergy-Men it is the greateſt of Scandals; from that minute the Goſpel becomes of no effect in their Mouths, the Laws of God are trampled upon, the moſt ſacred things are no longer reſpected, Divine Worſhip and the Sacraments are profaned, the Miniſtry grows vile, Religion in general falls under Contempt, and the People being no longer curb'd by the Reverence due to it, give up themſelves, to an entire Licentiouſneſs. I confeſs that Chriſtians ought to follow the Doctrine rather than the Example of their Guides, and that it is poſſible to profit by the Inſtructions of a Man, who does not practiſe what he teaches. But every Body has not diſcretion and firmneſs enough, to ſeperate thus the Doctrine from the Example, and not to be ſhaken by the Scandal occaſioned by Church-Men, when their Life and their Preaching contradict each other. Men are very much taken with Outſides, and govern themſelves more by Imitation than Reaſon. A great many Perſons want nothing but Pretexts and Excuſes, to juſtifie them in ill things; and there is no pretence more ſpecious, than that which the ill Lives of the Miniſters of Religion affords. When the People ſee Men who are inceſſantly ſpeaking of God and recommending Piety, and yet do not practiſe themſelves what they preach, they reject all that comes from them,

them, they fancy that the Goſpel is preached only for forms-ſake, and that the Maxims of Religion may be ſafely violated. Cauſe III.

2. But St. *Paul* requires ſomewhat more in Paſtors, than not to be ſcandalous; this is but the firſt and the loweſt dgree of Probity. He would have them beſides to be adorned with all manner of Virtues; * *To be vigelant, prudent, grave, modeſt and given to hoſpitality, gentle, charitable, lovers of good men, wiſe, juſt, holy and chaſte, ſhewing themſelves in all things patterns of good works, of purity, gravity, and integrity.* And indeed Paſtors are not only appointed to inſtruct and govern their Flocks, but they are obliged beſides to ſet them a good Example, and to be their Patterns; and they do not edifie leſs by their good Extmples, than by their Exhortations. The Purity of their Manners, and the regularity of their Conduct, give a great Weight, to all the Functions of their Miniſtry, theſe make their Perſons venerable, and engage a great many to imitate them. Now whether theſe Qualifications are to be found in Paſtors, every body may judge. I except thoſe who ought to be excepted, but for the generality, Wherein do Church-Men differ from other Men? Do they diſtinguiſh themſelves by a regular and exemplary Life? Their Exterior indeed is ſomething different, they live more retired, they preſerve a little Decorum, tho' even this is not done by all; but as for the reſt, are

* Tim. III. &c. Tit. I. and II.

Part II. they not as much addicted to the World, and taken up with earthly things, have they not as many humane and ſecular Views, are they not as much wedded to Intereſt and other Paſſions as the bulk of Chriſtians are?

3. This ſecond degree of Probity is not ſufficient. The Life of an Hypocrite may be blameleſs and even edifying; by compoſing his Exterior he may paſs for a Saint. There is therefore a third Degree, and that is the Rectitude of the Heart, a good Conſcience, a great meaſure of true Piety, Devotion, Humility and Zeal. Paſtors ought to be in private, inwardly and in the ſight of God, what they appear to other Men. And certainly none can have greater Inducements to Piety, than a Man whoſe ordinary Buſineſs it is to meditate upon Religion, to ſpeak of it to others, to reprove Hypocriſie and Vice; to perform Divine Service, to adminiſter the Sacraments to viſit afflicted and dying People; and to give an account to God of a great number of Souls. I do not know whether there is a higher Degree of Impiety and Hypocriſie, than when a Man who is in theſe Circumſtances is not a good Man. Such a Man makes but Sport with the moſt ſacred things in Religion, he does properly play the part of a Comedian, and of an Hypocrite all his Life. No Profeſſion damns more certainly, than that of a Church-Man, when it is thus exerciſed.

It may perhaps be ſaid, that all theſe Moralities are nothing to my purpoſe; that this third

third degree of Probity, is neceſſary only for the Salvation of Paſtors in particulear, and that as the People are unacquainted with the inward Diſpoſitions of their Teachers, and are not able to diſtinguiſh true from counterfeit Piety, it is enough for their Edification, that the Exterior ſhould be well regulated. But thoſe who think this, are very much miſtaken. This want of Piety and Devotion is capital, and here we find the main Cauſe of the remiſneſs of Paſtors, and of the Corruption of the People. From whence do thoſe Faults proceed which we have obſerved in Clergy-Men? How comes it to paſs that ſome of them are ignorant and lazy, that others apply themſelves to unprofitable Subjects and Studies, that others Preach only out of Vanity, and that their Diſcourſes are languid and jejune? All this, is becauſe their Hearts are void of Devotion and Piety. Cauſe III.

There are ſome preaching Matters, and thoſe too the moſt edifying, which can never be well managed, but by a Man animated with ſincere Piety. Thoſe Preachers who deſcribe the Beauty of Virtue, or the happy State of a good Conſcience, the hopes of another Life, or the neceſſity of working out one's Salvation, and who are not affected and pierced thorough with what they ſay, do but ſtammer about theſe things, and they will hardly excite thoſe Motions in other Men's hearts, which they never felt in their own. We cannot preach with Succeſs without knowing

Part II. the heart of Man, and this Knowledge ought to be the chief Study of thoſe who preach the Goſpel. But the ſureſt and the moſt compendious way to know Man's Heart aright, is to conſult our own, to reflect upon our ſelves, and to have a ſpotleſs Conſcience: Without this a Man is ſtill a Novice and a Bungler in Preaching. And ſo in the Exerciſe of Diſcipline; in private Exhortations, in the viſiting of the Sick, in Prayers, and in all other Paſtoral Functions, there is ſtill ſomething defective, when a Man does not perform them, out of a Principle of Charity, but only to diſcharge the outward Obligations, which his Office lays upon him.

Pious and good Church-Men, who are not on the other hand deſtitute of Gifts, fulfill much better the Duties of their Miniſtry. A Paſtor who loves his Profeſſion, who lays the Functions of it to Heart, who is thoroughly convinced of the Truths of Religion, and who practiſes the Rules of it; who in private humbles himſelf before God, and ardently implores his Bleſſing; who is ever intent upon ſeeking Means to Edify the Church; who turns all his Meditation that way; who thinks Day and Night of the Neceſſities of his Flock; muſt needs be ſucceſsful, he has in himſelf the Principle of all Benedictions and happy Succeſs. When he is ſpeaking or Exhorting, it is his Heart that ſpeaks, and the Language of the Heart, has a kind of Eloquence and Perſwaſiveneſs in it, which

which is soon discerned by the Hearers, and which always raises a Pious and a Zealous Preacher, above a Mercenary and Hypocritical one. The want of Piety in Pastors, is therefore the principal Source of the Faults they commit, and of the mischiefs which proceed from their Remisness. Cause III.

Whosoever will seriously and without Prejudice Consider all that I have now said, must own, That the Cause of the Corruption of Christians is chiefly to be found in the Clergy. I do not mean to speak here of all Church-men indifferently. We must do right to some, who distinguish themselves by their Talents, their Zeal and the Holiness of their Lives. But the Number of these is not considerable enough to stop the Course of those Disorders which are occasioned in the Church by the vast Multitudes of remiss and corrupt Pastors. These pull down, what the others endeavour to build up. Some perhaps, will ask, Whence do all these Faults of the Clergy proceed? In answer to this Question, I have Three Things to say.

1. It ought not to be thought strange, that Pastors should not fulfill all the Obligations of their Office. As things are constituted almost every where with relation to Discipline, to the Inspection and Authority over Private Persons, to the Visiting of the Sick, and to some other parts of their Employment, they cannot if they would discharge their Duties. Neither the Magistrates nor the People would suffer it.

Part II. On the other hand, the Defects of Pastors, are the consequences of the Contempt and Abasement which their Office is brought under, as well as of the Poverty they live in. This Contempt and Poverty discourage a great many, who might otherwise considerably Edify the Church; and they are the Cause why Multitudes, who have neither Education, nor Talents, nor Estates, dedicate themselves to the Ministry of the Gospel. It is commonly imagined, that all sorts of Persons are good enough for the Church; and whereas the *Jews* did offer their most Excellent Things to God, among Christians, what is least valued is Consecrated to God and the Church. Some are devoted to the Holiest and the most exalted of all Professions, who would not be thought capable of an Employment of any Consideration in the Common-wealth. If then we intend to remedy the Faults of the Clergy, we should begin with Redressing what is defective in the State of the Church and Religion in general.

2. Many Ecclesiasticks fail in the Duties of their Calling, because they do not know what it obliges them to; and this they do not know, because it was never Taught them. There are indeed Schools, Academies and Universities, which are designed to Instruct those Young Men, who aspire to this Profession; but I cannot tell whether Schools and Academies, as they are ordered almost every where, do not do more hurt than good. For first, as to Manners, Young People live there Licentiously,

Licentiouſly, and are left to their own Conduct. The Care of Maſters and Profeſſors, does not extend to the Regulating of the Manners of their Diſciples. And this Diſorder is ſo great, that in ſeveral Univerſities of *Europe*, the Scholars and Students make publick Profeſſion of Diſſoluteneſs. They not only live there Irregularly, but they have Priviledges, which gives them a right to commit with impunity; all manner of Inſolencies, Brutalities and Scandals, and which exempt them from the Magiſtrates Juriſdiction. It is a ſhame to Chriſtianity, that Princes and Church-men ſhould not have yet aboliſhed thoſe Cuſtoms and Eſtabliſhments, which ſmell ſo rank of the Ignorance and Barbariſm of the Heathens. And yet theſe Univerſities are the Nurſeries out of which Paſtors, Doctors and Profeſſors are taken. Thoſe Scholars who neither have Birth, nor ſenſe of Vertue or Honour, and who have ſpent their Youth in Licentiouſneſs and Debauchery, ſpread themſelves into all Churches, and become the Depoſitaries, and in ſome meaſure the Arbitrators of Religion. Cauſe III.

As to the Studies which are purſued at Univerſities, I obſerve in them theſe Two Faults. The firſt relates to the Method of Teaching. Divinity is treated there and the Holy Scripture explained in a Scholaſtical and altogether Speculative Manner. Common Places are read, which are full of School-Terms, and of Queſtions not very material. There Young Men learn to Diſpute upon every

Part II. ry thing, and to resolve all Religion into Controversies. Now this Method ruins them, it gives them intricate and false Notions of Divinity, and it begets in them Dispositions directly opposite to those which are necessary to find out Truth.

The other Fault is more Essential: Little or no Care is taken in Academies, to Teach those who Dedicate themselves to the Service of the Church, several Things, the knowledge of which would be very necessary to them. The Study of History and of Church Antiquity, is neglected there.

Hence it is that most Divines, may be compared with People, who having never travelled, know no other Customs or ways of living but those which obtain in their Countries. As soon as you take these Divines out of their Common-places, they are in a Maze, and every thing seems new and singular to them. Morality is not taught in Divinity-Schools, but in a superficial and Scholastick manner; And in many Academies it is not taught at all. They seldom speak there of Discipline, they give few or no Instructions concerning the manner of exercising the Pastoral Care, or of Governing the Church. So that the greater part of those who are admitted into this Office, enter into it without knowing wherein it consists; all the Notion they have of it, is, that it is a Profession, which obliges them to preach, and to explain Texts. It were therefore to be wished, that for the

Glory

Glory of God, and the good of the Church, Schools and Universities should be reformed, and that the Manners and Studies of Young People, should be better regulated in those places. This reformation would not be impossible, if Divines and Professors would use their Endeavours about it. But those kind of Establishments are not easily altered. The Ordinary Method is continued, and things are done as they were of Old, because Men are willing to keep their Places, and the Stipends which are annexed to them. Cause III.

3. The Third and principal Remedy would be to use greater Caution, than is commonly done, when Men are to be admitted into Ecclesiastical Offices. The first Qualification to which, according to St. *Paul*, regard is to be had, is Probity and Integrity of Life. The Persons therefore who offer themselves, should in the first place be examined in relation to Manners, and to all those Moral Dispositions, which St. *Paul* requires in them, and those should be excluded in whom they are not found. But this Article is commonly slubbered over, and a Young Man must have been very dissolute, if he is refused upon the account of Immorality. So that the most Sacred of all Characters, is conferred upon many Persons, who according to the Divine Laws, ought to be rejected.

The other part of the Examination of Canditates, relates to their Ability and Talents. Now in order to judge of their Capacity, it is not

Part II. not enough to enquire whether they know their common-Place-Book, or whether they can make a Sermon; it would be neceſſary beſides to examine them about the Fundamentals of Religion, about Hiſtory, Diſcipline, the holy Scripture and Morality. All theſe are important Matters, the knowledge of which is of daily uſe with Referrence to Practice, and in the exerciſe of the Sacred Miniſtry. But they are not inſiſted upon. The examination turns upon ſome Trials about Preaching, and upon ſome Heads of Divinity which are Scholaſtically handled, by Arguments and Diſtinctions: After which if the Canditate has ſatisfied in ſome Meaſure, Ordination follows.

Now when ſuch Inſufficient Perſons are once admitted the Miſchief is done, and there is no Remedy. Theſe Men are afterwards appointed Paſtors in Churches, where for 30 or 40 Years, they deſtroy more than they edify. How many Churches are there thus ill provided, where the People live in groſs Ignorance, where the Youth are loſt for want of Inſtruction, and where a Thouſand Crimes are committed? The Cauſe of all this Evil, is in the Ordination of Paſtors.

It will no doubt be Objected, That if none were to be admitted but thoſe, who have all the neceſſary Qualifications, there would not be a ſufficient number of Paſtors, for all the Churches. To which I Anſwer, that tho' this ſhould happen, yet it were better to run into

into this Inconvenience than to break the expreſs Laws of God. A ſmall number of Select Paſtors, is to be preferred before a Multitude of unworthy Labourers. We are ſtill to do what God Commands, and to leave the Event to Providence. But after all, this ſcarcity of Paſtors is not ſo much to be feared. Such a ſtrictneſs will only diſcourage thoſe, who would never have been uſeful in the Church, and it is a thing highly Commendable to diſhearten ſuch Perſons: But this exactneſs will encourage thoſe, who are able to do well, and the Miniſtry will be ſo much the more eſteemed and ſought after.

CAUSE IV.

The Defects of Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates.

Cauſe IV.

IF it had been poſſible without an eſſential Omiſſion, not to have detected this Cauſe of Corruption, I would have paſſed it over in ſilence. We ought not to ſpeak of the Higher Powers, but with great Diſcretion and Reſpect: And therefore it is not without ſome kind of Relunctancy, that I ſuppoſe in the Title of this Chapter, that one of the Cauſes of Corruption is to be found in Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates. But if I had ſuppreſt this, I ſhould have diſſembled a moſt impor-

Part II. important Truth, and omitted one of the Heads, which are the moſt neceſſary to be inſiſted upon in a work of this Nature. By reaſon of the Rank which Princes and Magiſtrates hold, they have always a great ſhare in the good or ill manners of the People. And ſo I cannot excuſe my ſelf from ſhewing, that the Corruption of Chriſtians, may partly be imputed to thoſe, who are ordained for the Government of Civil Society. In order to this I ſhall offer ſome Reflections upon the Duty of Princes and Magiſtrates, Conſidered 1. As Civil, and 2. As Chriſtian Magiſtrates.

Although the Inſtitution of Princes and Magiſtrates does properly relate to civil Matters; yet the Manner of governing their People, has a great Influence upon the Things of Religion. This cannot be queſtioned, if we ſuppoſe this Principle; That God who is the Author of the Religion, is alſo the Author of civil Society and Magiſtracy. It is St. *Paul's* Doctorine, * *That there is no power but of God, and that the Powers that be are ordained of God.* If God is the Author of Religion, and of civil Society, he is alſo the Author of thoſe Laws upon which both Religion, and Civil Society are founded. Now God being always conſiſtent with himſelf, the Laws which are derived from him, cannot contradict one another; and this ſhews already, not only that there is no oppoſition between Religion and Civil Society, but that theſe two

* Rom. XIII. 1

things

things having besides, a necessary relation to one another. This will yet more clearly appear, if we consider that Religion does not cut off Christians from the Society of other Men, and that the Church does not constitute a State by it self, to have nothing to do with Civil Society; but that those who are Members of the Church, are likewise Members of civil Society, so that the same Man is at the same time both a Christian and a Citizen. Cause IV.

But it is chiefly necessary to consider the Nature of the Christian Religion. 1. It was to be preached to all Men, and to be received by all the World, without distinction of Nations, Kingdoms, or States. In order to this, two things were necessary. First, that there should be nothing in Religion, contrary to the Natural Constitution of States and of civil Society. For else, God by ordering the Gospel to be preached, would have destroyed his own work, Christianity could not have taken footing in the World, and the first Christians would have been justly looked upon, as seditious Persons. But it is not less necessary on the other hand, that there should be nothing repugnant to the Christian Religion, in the natural Constitution of States and civil Society; otherwise God by establishing Society, would have put an insuperable Obstacle to the planting of the Gospel, unless the civil Order and Government had been altered. But our Saviour has assured us that there was to be no such thing, by declaring

* *that*

Part II. * *that his kingdom was not of this World*, and by commanding his Followers, † *to render to Cæſar the things which are Cæſars.*

2. One of the Chief Precepts of the Chriſtian Religion is, || *That all Men ſhould obey and be ſubject to the Higher Powers.* Now this Precept could not poſſibly be obſerved, if in the Natural Eſtabliſhment of Civil Society, there was ſomething incompatible, with the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity. * *No man can ſerve two Maſters*, when they command contrary things. But St. *Paul* goes further, he tells us that the preſervation of Kings, and the ſubmitting to their Authority is a mean for Chriſtians * *to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

3. It is remarkable, that whatever is good, and juſt in the Civil, is ſo likewiſe in the Religious Society; and that whatever is preſcribed by Religion is juſt, and even beneficial to Civil Society. The Law of Nature, which is the Foundation of Civil Laws, is confirmed by the Chriſtian Religion, and does perfectly agree with the Principles and Morals of the Goſpel. An evident proof of this, is, that when Chriſtian Emperours and Law-givers did ſet about the making of Laws and Conſtitutions, they retained the eſſential parts of the Laws and Conſtitutions received among the *Romans* and the *Greeks* in the time of Heatheniſm. And to this Day the

* John XVIII. † Mat. XXII. || Rom. XIII. * Mat. VI. † Tim. II. 2.

Old

Old *Roman* Law is followed among Chriſtians, excepting ſome Laws which have been altered or abrogated, either becauſe they were contrary to natural Juſtice and Equity, or becauſe they were not of a general and neceſſary Uſe. Cauſe IV.

4. It is certain, that Religion and Civil Society, do mutally ſupport one another, when both are well Regulated. Religion contributes to the happineſs of Society, by rendring the Authority of Princes more Sacred and Inviolable; and the good Order of Society, contributes to the welfare and the progreſs of Religion. Let us ſuppoſe a Magiſtrate who loves Piety and Juſtice; it is plain, that at the ſame time that he promotes the Intereſt of Religion, he ſtrengthens the welfare of Society, and that he cannot procure the good of Society, without advancing the intereſt of Religion. If we ſuppoſe on the other hand, a Magiſtrate who does not act by the Principles of Religion and Juſtice; it is viſible, that by ſuffering Religion to be violated or deſpiſed, he ſhakes the ſureſt Foundation of his own Authority, and of publick Tranquility, and that by failing in the Duties of his Office, and in the Exerciſe of Juſtice, he makes the People grow Vicious and neglect the Duties of Piety.

From theſe Conſiderations it does manifeſtly appear, that Princes and Magiſtrates may either procure great Advantages to Religion, or do it a conſiderable prejudice, and that they are in part the Authors of the Corruption which reigns in the World.

Part II. When Civil-Society is well Governed, Men are diſpoſed by that very thing to practice the Duties of Chriſtianity. In proportion as the People are well Ordered, they are more tractable and ſuſceptible of the empreſſions of Piety. As they are uſed to be Governed by the Laws of the Magiſtrate, they do the more eaſily ſubmit to the Holy Diſcipline of Chriſt; yea, and by Obeying Civil-Laws, they do already diſcharge ſome part of the Duties of Religion. But when Princes and Magiſtrates, either through Ignorance, or want of Probity and Vertue, give way to the violation of Juſtice and good Order, it is impoſſible but that Religion muſt ſuffer by it. For beſides, that the People cannot break the Civil Laws, without violating the Principles of Religion; How can they perform the Duties of Chriſtianity, when they do not diſcharge thoſe of Nature? It is very hard to perſuade People to the obſervation of the Precepts of the Goſpel, who do not ſubmit to the Laws of natural Reaſon and Juſtice. It is not to be expected that Men who do not order their outward Actions aright, ſhould regulate their Thoughts and reſiſt their Paſſions; or that being ſtrangers to the firſt Elements of Vertue, they ſhould come up to the practice of the moſt ſublime Precepts of Chriſtian Morals.

Beſides, the want of Order in the Adminiſtration of Juſtice and Goverment, draws after it all kinds of Diſorders with relation to Manners, ſuch as Diſhoneſty, and what is moſt dangerous,

dangerous, a Spirit of Libertiniſm and Inde- Cauſe
pendance, which makes Men untoward and IV.
refractory to good Diſcipline. We are to obſerve here that the greateſt part of Mens Lives are taken up with Civil Matters. All Perſons are bound to Obey the Magiſtrate, and few are altogether free from Law-Suits and Buſineſs; ſo that when the People are not well Governed with relation to Civil Things, they do ſo accuſtom themſelves to live without Rule or Reſtraint, that Religion can no longer have any Power over them. The neglect and remiſneſs of Princes and Magiſtrates do occaſion all this Miſchief.

But if the bear Careleſneſs of Magiſtrates is ſo fatal to Society; how muſt it be when they themſelves are Vicious and Unjuſt, either in their own particular Conduct, or in the Exerciſe of their Office? The greateſt Unhappineſs that can befal any People, is, when thoſe who are inveſted with the Supream Authority, favour Injuſtice and Vice. It may be ſaid then, That the publick Fountains are poyſoned. The whole State is ordered by the Sovereigns; they are thoſe from whom the Laws receive their Force, who appoint Judges and Magiſtrates, and who regulate the Adminiſtration of Juſtice. When inferior Magiſtrates prevaricate, this may be remedied by the Sovereign, but when the Sovereign himſelf fails in his Duty, no redreſs can be expected.

Not but that ſubordinate Officers and Magiſtrates, may likewiſe occaſion a great deal

Part II. of Miſchief. If we ſuppoſe in a Province, or a Town, Magiſtrates and Judges who want Integrity, who conſult only their Profit and Intereſt in the Exerciſe of their Offices, who are not proof againſt Bribes, who Adminiſter Juſtice from a principle of Covetouſneſs or Paſſion, who Act by Recommendation or Favour, and who are full of Artifice and Diſſimulation. This is enough to entroduce and authorize Wickedneſs throughout their whole Juriſdiction, to pervert Right, to baniſh Juſtice and Honeſty from all Courts, to make way for Knavery and Litigiouſneſs, for the protracting of Suits, the abuſe and violation of Oaths, and many other Diſorders. Then it is that Vice is in faſhion and repute, that Vertue and Innocency are oppreſſed, and that the People grow Corrupt. Now all this being a direct undermining of Religion and Piety, let any Body judge, whether I have not Reaſon to ſay, that the Corruption of the Age may be imputed to Princes or Magiſtrates.

But all theſe Evils are yet more unavoidable, when the Princes or Magiſtrates who are the Authors of them, profeſs the Chriſtian Religion. A Heathen Magiſtrate has not by much that influence upon Religion and Manners, that a Chriſtian has. The Church was purer and more ſeparated from the World, when the Superior Powers were contrary to it; but as ſoon as the Emperors had embraced Chriſtianity, Piety and Zeal did viſibly decay. Not but that Religion may receive, and has actually received great

Helps

Helps from Chriſtian Magiſtrates; they have ſometimes contributed very effectually to the promoting of Piety, and thoſe who do ſo, deſerve immortal Honour. But it muſt likewiſe be granted, that the Vices and ill Examples of Chriſtian Magiſtrates, corrupt the Church more, than if it were under Heathen Governors. Cauſe IV.

The Duty of Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates, as well as of all the Members of the Church is double. They are bound, Firſt, to ſerve God, and to diſcharge the Obligations which Religion lays upon all Men; and Secondly to take care, that God may be ſerved and honoured by all thoſe, who are ſubject to their Authority.

1. Every Chriſtian ought to ſerve God and to live according to the Precepts of the Goſpel. That very thing then, *that a Magiſtrate is Chriſtian*, obliges him to be a lover of Piety and Virtue. It is a Common Notion eſpecially among great Men, that Piety and Devotion do not become thoſe who are exalted to Dignities, and that publick Perſons are not to be ruled by the Maxims of Religion. But whoſoever maintains this Opinion, muſt deny the Principles of Religion, and be either an Atheiſt or a Deiſt. For ſuppoſing the Truth of Chriſtianity, it is beyond all doubt, that a Chriſtian Prince or Magiſtrate, has as much need of Piety as other Men have. He is bound to be a good Man by the ſame duty and intereſt, which engage private Men to be ſo; he has a Soul to be ſaved as well as they; and as

Part II. he is a publick Perſon, he is to give an account of his conduct to that Judge, with whom there is no acception of Perſons, and before whom the greateſt of Monarches, is no more than the meaneſt of Slaves.

If the eminent Station of a Magiſtrate makes ſome difference between him and Chriſtians of a lower Order, that difference obliges him to a higher degree of Piety. The Character he bears requires a great ſtock of Virtue. No ſmall meaſure of Probity is requiſite to acquit himſelf worthily in that Calling; to do no Injuſtice, not to ſeek in his Dignities the means to gratify his Intereſt, his Vanity, his Pride, or his other Paſſions. Without a firm an ſolid Virtue, he cannot withſtand thoſe Temptations which offer themſelves every minute, and which are the more dangerous and ſubtil, becauſe in thoſe exalted Poſts, ill things, for the moſt part, may be done with ſafety. If we add to all this, that an ill Magiſtrate is anſwerable for the greateſt part of the Diſorders which happen, and of the Crimes which are committed in Society, it muſt be confeſſed that Magiſtracy is a kind of Life, wherein Piety is extreamly neceſſary, and in which, great Circumſpection and a ſublime Virtue, are the only Preſervatives againſt a thouſand opportunities, of tranſgreſſing the Duties of Conſcience, and violating the moſt Sacred Laws of Religion and Juſtice.

II. It is the duty of Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates, to labour for the promoting of Virtue

Virtue and the suppressing of Vice among Men. We have shewn already that it is their interest to do so, since Religion is the surest Foundation of their Authority, and of the Fidelity of their People; but their Duty does besides indispensably oblige them to this. It cannot be denied but that this Obligation lies upon them, since every Christian is bound to advance the Kingdom of Christ, and to edify his Neighbours as much as he can in that State and Condition he is in. The Duty here is answerable to the ability, so that we may apply to this purpose, that Maxim of the Gospel, * *that to whom soever much is given, of him much shall be required.* Private Men cannot do much towards promoting the Glory of God; their Zeal and Good intentions are for the most part useless; it is not in their power to hinder general disorders, this ought therefore, to be done by Men of Authority, and they may do it easily. Besides, a Christian Magistrate is to consider that it was Providence which raised him to the Post he is in, and that by consequence he is engaged in Justice and Gratitude, to use his Authority for the Glory of God. Lastly, Would it not be a strange thing, that Christian Princes and Magistrates should do no Service to Religion, when Kings and Princes who are not Christians, can do so much hurt to it? Now they may advance the Kingdom of God and banish Corruptions, these two ways. 1. By their Example. 2. By their Care.

Cause IV.

1. By their Example. This Method is of

* Luke. XII. 48.

Part II. great efficacy. Examples are very forcible, but their effect, depends for the moſt part upon the Quality and Character of the Perſons they come from. It has been made appear in the foregoing Chapter, how much benefit redounds to the Church, from the good Lives and Examples of the Governours of it. But the example of Kings, Princes, and Magiſtrates is in ſome reſpects of greater weight. When a Church-man recommends Virtue by an exemplary Life, it is often ſaid that his Profeſſion obliges him to live ſo, and this conſideration makes his example to be of little force upon worldly-minded Men. But when Princes and Magiſtrates are pious, thoſe Men have no ſuch thing to ſay. The Splendor and Authority which ſurround Greatneſs, gives much credit to every thing that comes from great Men. They may ſometimes do more good with one word, than a Preacher can do by many Sermons.

I have ſhewed in the firſt Part of this Work that one of the greateſt Obſtacles to Piety, is a falſe Shame which reſtrains Men from doing their Duty, for fear of being obſerved and deſpiſed; and I am to ſhew hereafter, that Cuſtom has introduced among Chriſtians a great many Maxims and Practices contrary to the Spirit of the Goſpel. Theſe two things occaſion Corruption and till they are remedied, Vice and Impiety muſt ſtill reign. But the Example of great Men is ſufficient to remove almoſt intirely, both theſe Cauſes of Corruption. They are the Judges of Honour and Cuſtom; it

is

is in their power to make any thing which is reputed ſhameful, to be thought Honourable and to aboliſh that which is generally received. So that how ſcarce and deſpiſed ſoever Piety may be, an Idea of Honour would be affixed to it, if it was favoured and profeſſed by great Men, and that would be reſpected in them which in others, is looked upon with Indifference or Contempt. Cauſe IV.

That which has hapned with relation to Duels is a ſtrong proof of what I ſay. To decline fighting a Duel, has been thought for a long time a Diſgrace and an Infamy: A falſe notion of Honour did then bear down the ſtrongeſt Principles of Nature, Reaſon and Chriſtianity; and drive Men to that exceſs of Brutality and Madneſs, that they would cut one anothers Throat for a trifle. But in thoſe places where Chriſtian Princes have aboliſhed Duels, People are now of another mind, and think it no ſhame to refuſe a Challenge. And thus Swearing, Drunkenneſs, and the greateſt of other clamorous Sins, might be ſuppreſſed, if great Men pleaſed. Is it not obſerved beſides, that when a Prince is devout, Devotion comes into faſhion? It may be that this Devotion which proceeds from the Example of Princes, is not always ſincere; but at leaſt it regulates Manners as to the exterior; and ſuch an outward Reformation, may be a ſtep toward true Devotion. However this ſhews that the opinion and example of Men in Authority, has a great power. And ſurely if by

Part II. by their credit they can make Vice it ſelf to be honoured, would it not be much eaſier for them, to make other Men honour Virtue, ſince it is honourable in its own Nature?

I am not able to expreſs of what Conſequence the Example of great Men is, either for Good or Evil. A Prince who is vicious, cruel, diſſolute, artificious or unjuſt, is enough to infect a whole State in a very little time, to baniſh Piety from it, and to bring into repute Drunkenneſs, Lewdneſs, Cheating, Indevotion, and all the other Vices which he allows himſelf in. This we find by daily experience. Such as the Prince is, ſo are thoſe about him; and from theſe, the Evil ſpreads upon the whole People, by reaſon of the Credit and Authority to which they were raiſed, and of the Influence they have upon publick and Private Affairs. What might not be ſaid here of the Life which is led in the Courts of Princes? Excepting ſome few Courts where Licentiouſneſs is not ſuffered. That kind of Life which is followed at Court, for the generality, agrees little with the Spirit of Chriſtianity. People live there altogether in a looſe and worldly manner, in Luxury, Idleneſs, Pomp and Pleaſure. There, the ſtrongeſt and the moſt inticing Temptations are to be met with, and the moſt criminal Intrigues, Adultery it ſelf, are rather a Matter of Railery, than Reproach. It is almoſt impoſſible for a Man to inſinuate himſelf into the Favour of Princes, and to advance his Fortune at Court, unleſs he

he makes it his Maxim to diſſemble his Sentiments, and to ſpeak directly againſt his own Thoughts. The worſt of it is, that from thence Corruption diffuſes it ſelf almoſt every where; ſo that many Diſorders which are in Vogue, would be unknown, or at leaſt very rare in the World, if they had not been introduced by that Licentiouſneſs, which reigns in the Courts of Princes. Cauſe IV.

I come now to the Endeavours, which Chriſtian Magiſtrates ought to uſe, for the Edification of the Church and the reviving of Piety; theſe Endeavours relate either to Civil Matters, or to Religion.

1. In Civil Matters, it is their Duty to reſtrain Libertiniſm and Corruption, by regulating the Manners of their Subjects, either by repealing the Laws and Cuſtoms which do not agree with Religion, and which engage the People into the violation of the Precepts of the Goſpel, or by reforming the Abuſes which are introduced from time to time, particularly thoſe which creep into the Adminiſtration of Juſtice. In relation to all theſe things, there are ſeveral Faults which the Church cannot provide againſt, and which nothing can remedy but the Magiſtrates Authority.

2. The other Care relates directly to Religion. 1. Princes and Kings profeſſing Chriſtianity, are bound to procure, as much as in them lies, the Welfare of the Church. They ought to ſet about the eſtabliſhing of Truth and Peace, provided that in order to that, they uſe no Means

Part II. Means but such, as are suitable to the Gospel. They ought by their Authority to see that the Church and Religion want nothing of what is necessary, for the maintaining of Order and Decency; that Divine Service be duly performed; that there be both Places for that Purpose and a sufficient number of Persons to take care of the Edification of the Church; that those Persons may subsist honourably, that they do their Duty and keep themselves within the bounds of their Calling. They must not suffer Church Goods or Revenues to be applied to uses meerly Civil; and when these Revenues are not sufficient, it becomes their Piety and Justice, to allot some part of the publick Revenues, for the necessities of the Church. In fine; as to Manners, I observed before, that they may easily give a stop to Vice and Impiety, to Luxury, Swearing, and other Scandals which dishonour the Church. And if they can do this, they ought to do it, every Christian being bound to do all that is in his Power, to promote the Glory of God.

2. It is certain, that Magistrates who are Members of the Church, ought to protect it, to maintain the Order which God has established in it, and not to suffer any breach to be made there. So that tho' they may regulate many things which concern Religion, and tho' the Church owes them a great Regard, yet they cannot without Usurpation and Injustice, arrogate to themselves the whole Authority,

thority, with relation to Eccleſiaſtical Affairs. They are neither the Princes nor the Heads of the Church, as they are the Princes and the Heads of Civil Society. An Authority ſuperior to theirs, has inſtituted, Religion, Paſtors and Diſcipline. There is a Law enacted by the KING of Kings, and the Head of the Church, which clearly determines the Rights and Duties, both of the Church and of the Govenour of it; All theſe are Sacred things, which earthly Powers are not to meddle with. They are Laws which Princes and Magiſtrates did ſubmitto, when they became a Members of the Church; with reſpect to theſe (I mean ſtill eſſential things appointed by the Word of God) they have acquired no Right by embracing Chriſtianity; ſince he who becomes Member of a Society, cannot by that acquire a Right to alter the natural Form aud Conſtitution of it. Cauſe IV.

The Inſtance of the Kings of *Judah*, ſhews that a Prince who profeſſes true Religion, may interpoſe in the Affairs of it: But we muſt take care not to carry this Iuſtance too far, as thoſe do, who aſcribe to the Magiſtrate, a ſupreme Authority in the Church; who allow him a Right to order every thing there; not excepting Diſcipline, the calling of Paſtors, nor even the Articles of Faith. For beſides that under the Law, Kings were by no means the Judges of every thing, which concerned Religion; we are not to argue altogether about the Chriſtian Religion, from what was done in the Jewiſh Church. Among the

Jews

Part II. *Jews* the Church and the State were mixed together, and in ſome meaſure undiſtinguiſhed from one another. That meerly ſpiritual Society which is called the Church, and which is confined to no State, or People, or any particular Form of Civil Government; was properly erected ſince the coming of Chriſt. God acted among the *Jews* as a Civil Magiſtrate. The Laws of the Jewiſh Religion were for the moſt part external Laws, which might and ought to be maintained by Force and Authority. The Rights of Divine Service, and the Functions of Prieſts, were very different from the Evangelical Worſhip and from the Office of Chriſtian Paſtors. After all, if we ſhould go by the practice of the Jewiſh Church, it would follow, that the Miniſters of Religion are inveſted with Civil Authority, and a very great Authority too. The Jewiſh Prieſts held a conſiderable Rank in the State as well as in Religion. If upon ſome occaſions Kings have depoſed Prieſts; upon other occaſions Prieſts have oppoſed Kings and altered the Government.

* So that without preſſing too much thoſe Inſtances out of the Old Teſtament, the beſt way is to conſult the New, and to proceed according to the Laws of the Apoſtles, and the Nature of the Chriſtian Religion. And whoſoever examines without Prejudice thoſe Sacred Books, which have been writ ſince the Coming of our Saviour, will acknowledge,

* See Chron. XXIII. and XXVI.

that

that things are now altered, and that Magistrates have but a limited Authority in Matters of Religion. It is remarkable, that the Scripture never mentions them, when it speaks of the Church and of the Government of it. Cause IV.

3. And yet as the Authority of Princes and Magistrates, is derived from God, it ought still to subsist entire. And therefore they have an unquestionable Right, to take care that nothing be done in the Church, to the Prejudice of their lawful Authority, and of publick Tranquility; and that the Ministers of Religion do not stretch their Authority, beyond spiritual things. The Honour and the Safety of Religion, require that this Principle should be laid down; for Religion, as was said before, ought not, to disturb Society, and true Religion will never disturb it. If then any Christians or Church-men under pretence of Religion, should break in upon the Civil Government and the publick Peace, Kings and Princes have a Right to restrain them, and then they do not oppose Religion, but those only who abuse and dishonour it.

After these Considerations, I think any Man is able to judge, whether the decay of Piety and Religion, is not in part to be imputed to Christian Princes and Magistrates. We need but enquire whether both in Civil and Religious Matters, they observe the Duties I have now described. I say no more of this, because every body is able to make the Application.

But I must add, That if the want of Zeal in

Magistrates

Part II. Magiſtrates is enough to introduce Confuſion and Vice into the Church; the Miſchief is much greater, when not only, they do not what they ought for the good of Religion, but when they uſe their Authority beſides, to the prejudice of it. I cannot forbear mentioning here two great Abuſes.

7 The Firſt is, when Princes and Magiſtrates aſſume the whole Authority to themſelves, ſo that except Preaching and Adminiſtring the Sacraments, they will do every thing in the Church: When they perſume to determine Articles of Faith, to rule the Conſcience of their Subjects, and to force them to embrace one Perſuaſion rather than another; when they will by all means take upon them to call Paſtors, without regard to that Right of the Church and Church-men, which is eſtabliſhed in Scripture, and confirmed by the practice of the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity; when they ſeize upon Church-Eſtates, tho' there is no Reaſon to fear that Wealth ſhould corrupt their Clergy, and tho' ſuch Revenues might be applied to ſeveral pious Uſes, and particularly to the Relief of Country-Churches, moſt of which are not ſufficiently edified, for want of neceſſary Endowments and Funds. A great deal might be ſaid about that which was done in the laſt Century with relation to Church-Revenues; and it were to be wiſhed, that People had been a little more ſcrupulous than they were, when they invaded the Poſſeſſions of the Church, and confounded them with the Revenues of the State. Beſides

Besides this the Magistrates Authority is fatal to the Church, when he hinders the exercise of true Discipline, and when he substitutes such Regulations as he thinks fit, in the room of Apostolical Laws. This is one of the greatest obstructions to the restoring of Apostolical Discipline. Tho' the Church and her Pastors should be willing to observe the ancient Order, and to oppose Corruption by those Means which the Gospel enjoyns, yet this is not to be done, if those who have the Authority in their hands will not give way to it. The Church is not in a condition to resist, and to make head against the Magistrate, when he uses Force; and She ought not to do it, if She could. Cause V.

The second Abuse is, when the Magistrate makes it his business to abase Religion, in the Persons of its Ministers, by despoiling them as much as he can, of every thing that might procure them Respect and Authority in the Church. This Policy is as contrary to the Interest of Religion, and to the promoting of Piety, as it is common now adays, in several Christian Dominions. It is well done of the Magistrate to preserve his Authority, and to keep the Clergy from exceeding the bounds of their Calling; but from thence it does not follow, that he ought to trample them under foot, to bring them under a general Contempt, and to vilify their Character, which after all is Sacred and Venerable. This is to sacrifice Religion to Policy and Pride, and this

Part II. proceeding is a manifeſt Cauſe of the contempt of Religion, and of the Corruption which neceſſarily follows that Contempt, ſince commonly, nothing is more deſpiſed in the World, than that which great Men deſpiſe.

I declare it once more, by all that has been ſaid, I do not mean to detract any thing from the Reſpect due to Civil Powers, neither do I ſpeak of all Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates, among whom there are ſome who have Piety and Zeal, and who labour with ſucceſs, for the good of Religion. But the Glory of God requires, that we ſhould ſpeak the truth, ſo that I could not but take notice of this Cauſe of Corruption. Upon the whole matter, it is to be hoped; that if Chriſtian Magiſtrates would be pleaſed to make ſerious Reflections upon all theſe Things, we ſhould ſoon ſee an end of ſome of theſe Diſorders; and that a happier time will come when they will uſe their Authority, to advance the Honour of God, and to reſtore Truth, Piety and Peace among Chriſtians.

CAUSE V.

Education.

NOthing is more natural than to look for the Original of Corruption, in the time at which it begins; I mean in the firſt Years of Life. It is not only when Men have attained

tained to a ripeneſs of Age, that they are inclined to Vice, but that Inclination diſcovers it ſelf from their Youth. The Root of that Ignorance, of thoſe Prejudices, and of the greateſt part of the ill Diſpoſitions they are in may be found in their tender years. We had need then look back upon the beginnings of Life, and ſeek in Youth, and in Infancy it ſelf, the Source of Corruption. Cauſe V.

When we enter upon this Enquiry, and conſider that Men, if nothing reſtrains them, will run into Vice from their Youth, out of a propenſion which is common to all, we cannot but perceive at firſt ſight, that there muſt be in them a certain Principle of Corruption, which makes them thus prone to ill things. But if we reflect upon this Matter with any attention, we may likewiſe be ſatisfied, that it would not be impoſſible to rectifie at leaſt in part, that vicious Inclination, and to prevent the fatal Conſequences of it by the means of Education; and that it is chiefly the wrong Method of educating Children, which feeds that Diſpoſition to Evil, and which encreaſes and ſtrengthens it. This is what I intend to ſhew in this Chapter. I hope to make it clearly appear, that the Corruption of Men, is to be imputed to the Education they had in their Youth; and that conſidering how Children are brought up, it is impoſſible, but that Ignorance and Vice, muſt generally prevail in the World. I ſhall begin with general Reflections, upon the Education of Children, and in the next place I

Part II. ſhall ſpeak of their Education, with a particular Regard to Religion and Piety.

My firſt Reflection is, that the World conſiſts for the moſt part of People who have no Education, and whoſe Unhappineſs it is to have been wholly neglected in their Youth. This may particularly be obſerved among Perſons of mean Birth. Every body knows that ſuch kind of People, have no manner of Education; that from their Childhood they are abandoned to themſelves, without either Inſtruction, Correction, or any other help, and that living with ignorant groſs and vitious Parents between worldly buſineſs and ill examples, they ſpend their youth almoſt like Brutes.

This firſt Reflection, which may be applied to many Thouſand Chriſtians, diſcovers to us already a plain reaſon of the extream Corruption, which appears in their Manners. We wonder ſometimes that Men are ſo depraved, and that great Multitudes of them have almoſt no Senſe at all, either of Religion or Conſcience, or of Reaſon and Humanity. We think it ſtrange, that there ſhould be among Chriſtians, Impious Perſons, Blaſphemers of the Name of God, Thieves, Poiſoners, Men who defile themſelves with the moſt infamous Sins, and who make Conſcience of nothing. One would think Human Nature were not capable of ſuch Enormities; and yet they are committed by a great many. But we may eaſily apprehend how this comes to paſs, if we conſider what Education thoſe

Perſons

Perſons had. Inſtead of being brought up like Chriſtians, they have not ſo much as been educated like Rational Creatures. The Light of Nature has been extinguiſhed in them from their very Infancy, ſo that having ſcarce any Notion of Good or Evil, they give up themſelves to Vice without ſcruple or remorſe, almoſt in the ſame manner as the Heathens did of Old. Cauſe V.

II. But as this total Defect of Education is not univerſal, ſo we are to enquire in the Second place, How Children are bred up, and to obſerve here the principal Faults which are committed about their Education.

1. The Education of Children is not begun ſoon enough, nothing is done to them in the firſt Years of their Lives. As ſoon as Children begin to have ſome kind of Reaſon, the firſt Principles of Virtue ſhould be inſtill'd into them. For tho' the Ideas and Actions of young Children are very confuſed, yet it is in Infancy that Paſſions and Habits begin to ſpring up. At 3 or 4 Years Old, Children give ſome ſigns of what they are to be all their Lives, and from that time it may be known, what their predominate Inclinations will be. If that time was well improved, it would be an eaſie and compendious way to give Children a good Education. They may then without any great trouble be made to do thoſe things, which they cannot be brought to without much time and difficulty, when they are once come to 14 or 15; ſome little Care and gentle Correction, may ſtifle

Part II. a Paſſion in its birth, it may cure Anger and Stubbornneſs in a Child, it may ſoften his Inclinations, and make him obedient and towardly. A little caution uſed about his Diet, may render him ſober and temperate for his whole Life. But that time which is ſo precious, is that, wherein Children are moſt neglected.

This delay of Education proceeds from Two Cauſes. 1. That Men have not a true Notion of the Education of Children, and of the End to be aimed at in it. It is commonly imagined, that the Breeding up of Children, is the Teaching them Latin, Learning a Trade, or ſome other Things, which are uſually Taught them, in order to fit them for thoſe Callings to which they are deſigned. And as Children are not capable of applying themſelves to Arts and Sciences before a certain Age, ſo their Education, is deferred till then. But if Men did well underſtand, that the chief deſign of Education, is to form the Judgment and the Temper of Children, they would not ſtay ſo long before they took care of them.

2. The firſt Years of Children are neglected, and their Conduct then is not much minded, becauſe Vice does not then ſhew it ſelf in all its Deformity. All that they do is then look'd upon as innocent, and every thing in them appears pleaſant, not excepting their very Faults. If they are too Lively, or of a reſolute Humour, if they happen to be in a Paſſion, to Lye, to ſpeak undecent and filthy Words, to do little ſly naughty Tricks; all this

this for the moſt part, makes only People laugh commend and applaud them. It is not conſidered that thoſe are the fore-runners of Vice, and that theſe beginings call for a ſpeedy remedy. Young Children are not capable of Crimes: Impiety, Uncleanneſs, Cruelty and premeditated Malice, are not to be found in them, but if we narrowly obſerve them we may ſpy out the ſeeds and the buddings of thoſe Vices in their Actions and Manners. This is not much taken notice of; Paſſions and ill habits are ſuffered to grow quietly during Childhood, and they are quite formed and ſettled before they are obſerved. At Seven or Eight Years of Age, Innocency is already loſt and the Heart is corrupted. People begin to think of Educating their Children when the fitteſt ſeaſon for Education is paſt, and when they have already thoſe Principles of Corruption in them, which they will never ſhake off. Cauſe V.

2. There is no care taken to form the Mind and Judgment of Children. Reaſon being the moſt eſſential Property of Men, is that which ought to be chiefly cultivated in Young People; and all that they are Taught beſides, is of little uſe, if they are not accuſtomed to this. Great labour is uſed to learn them Languages and Sciences, their Memory is exerciſed, they are loaded with ſeveral Inſtructions, their Heads are filled with a multitude of Words and Ideas; but it would be without compariſon more important, to cul-

Part II. tivate their Judgment. Whatever they may be deſign'd for, no greater good can be procur'd to them, than to make them able to paſs a ſound Judgment upon Things, and to govern themſelves by Reaſon. True Senſe is neceſſary at all times, and it is of a general uſefulneſs in our whole Life. It is therefore an unhappineſs for Children that in this reſpect they are ſo much neglected. Men have not the patience to reaſon with them, and to teach them to Speak and to Act wiſely. They are ſuffer'd to be among People who can neither Speak nor Reaſon, they converſe for the moſt part, only with Servants or other Children. By this means they accuſtom themſelves to take up falſe Notions, to judge of Things only by their appearances, to reſolve raſhly and without Conſideration, and to be governed only by their Senſes, Paſſions, or Prejudices. From thence proceed almoſt all the Faults which they commit afterwards; but this is eſpecially the cauſe of that affection which Men bear to Sin and to the Things of this World. The firſt Quality of a Chriſtian, is to be a Rational Man, it being impoſſible that a Man who cannot make uſe of his Reaſon, and who has no Senſe, ſhould judge aright of Spiritual Things, curb his Paſſions, renounce his Prejudices, and conſtantly follow the Rules of his Duty.

3. I ſhall not here enumerate all the particular Faults which are ſuffer'd in Children; but there are two which I cannot but take notice of, becauſe I look upon them as the cauſe of

of moſt of the Paſſions and Vices, to which Men are addicted. Firſt there are no ſufficient endeavours uſed to make Children tractable, and to ſubject them to the Will of others. The ground-work of a good Education is to keep them in Awe and Obedience; and not to let them grow independant, and obſtinate in their own Will and Paſſions; ſo that when we command or forbid them a thing it is by all means neceſſary to make them obey. When we obſerve in them too ſtrong an Inclination to any thing, tho' the thing were innocent, yet becauſe they deſire it too earneſtly, they are not always to be indulg'd in it. But care is to be taken, that when we croſs their Will, we do it with mildneſs, and in ſuch a manner, as may give them to underſtand, that it is with reaſon and for their good we oppoſe them, and not out of humour, or only to vex them. When Children are thus dealt with, they may be turn'd which way ſoever we pleaſe. It keeps them from Stubbornneſs and Self-love, it teaches them to overcome their Deſires, to ſubmit to Corrections, and to follow the Advice which is given them. In a word, Tractableneſs in a Child, is a diſpoſition to every thing that is good, and the foundation of all Virtues. But no good can be expected from a Child who is not docile and obedient. If he is permitted while young to be independent, and to do what he liſts, he will be much more abſolute when he comes to a riper Age.

Cauſe V.

The other Fault which it is very neceſſary

to

Part II. to prevent is the love of the Body and of the Objects of Senſe. A carnal Temper, is by the teſtimony of Scripture it ſelf, the root of all Vices. But the firſt riſe of that irregular affection, which Men bear to every thing that gratifies their Body, is in their infancy. For beſides, that Children govern themſelves only by ſenſe; that byaſs they have towards ſenſible things, is forfeited by the ſenſual Education, which is beſtow'd upon them. None but groſs and material Objects, are propoſed to them; they are entertain'd only with thoſe things which affect the Senſes, and no Ideas but thoſe of bodily Pleaſures or Pains, are excited in them. The Promiſes and Threats, the Rewards and Puniſhments, which are uſed to gain upon them, relate only to Corporeal things. And here it ought not to be omitted, that they are chiefly ſpoiled, by being indulged in Gluttony, and vanity of Cloaths. Theſe are the two firſt Paſſions of Children; the two Inclinations by which they begin to grow Corrupt and to love the World; nothing makes ſo much impreſſion upon them as that which affects their Eyes or their Palate.

If Children were uſed to a ſimplicity of Diet and Apparel, this would preſerve them, from many dangerous Vices and Paſſions; it would diſpoſe them for thoſe Virtues which are the moſt neceſſary to a wiſe Man and a Chriſtian; it would inure them to Sobriety, Labour, Prudence, Humility, to the contempt of Pleaſure, and to Firmneſs and Patience in

Cala-

Calamities. This would make their Constitution stronger, and prevent divers Infirmities, which both afflict and shorten their Lives. But ill Custom prevails against the Maxims of Reason and Christianity. Little caution is used in relation to their Diet; they are suffered to eat much beyond that which Nature requires, and they are accustomed to be liquorish and dainty in their eating. As for Cloaths and Decking, Fathers and more especially Mothers, have that Weakness, that they love to see their Children fine and spruce. Besides this, the way of breeding up Children of the better sort, makes them soft, effeminate and lovers of Pleasure. The fruit of such an Education, is, that Children become Slaves to their Bodies and to their Senses; they are taken with nothing but bodily Pleasures and worldly Things. From thence spring in process of time; Intemperance, Uncleanness, Pride, Covetousness, and most of the greater kind of Sins. This is likewise the principal cause of Indevotion, and of the little relish which Men find in spiritual Things, particularly in Religion and Piety. A sensual Education occasions all these Evils. Cause V.

4. It will not be improper to observe here, That frequently the Education which is given to those Children, who are destined to Sciences and considerable Employments, either in the Church or in Civil Society, does but corrupt their Inclinations. They are sent to Colleges and Universities, where being trusted with themselves, they live in Independence and

Part II. and Libertiniſm; and they are ſent thither at an Age, in which without a kind of Miracle, they cannot fail of being undone. They are as it were emancipated from the inſpection of their Parents; they are expos'd without defence to the moſt dangerous Seductions, and that at the very time, when they are the moſt unfit to regulate their Conduct, and the moſt ſuſceptible of ill Impreſſions and vicious Examples. Children would be much better Educated with relation both to Sciences and good Manners, if their Parents did not make ſo much haſte, and if they did not ſpur them on to Study, till their Judgment was a little formed, and eſpecially if they took care to confirm them in the Principles of Religion and Virtue, before they were ſent from Home. Some alteration ſhould likewiſe be made in Colleges. For the very Studies which Youths purſue there, are inſtrumental to Debauch them. They learn Latin and Obſcenity together. Authors are put into their Hands, the reading of whom raiſes impure Ideas in their Minds; and as if there was a deſign to ſtifle in them all ſenſe of Modeſty, they are made to interpret and to rehearſe very undecent things. When all is well conſidered, young People acquire but little of uſeful Learning in Colleges and Academies, at the rate they live and ſtudy in thoſe Places; and there too they commonly leave their Innocency.

5. The means of procuring to Children a happy Education, are not uſed as they ſhould be.

be. These Means are Instruction, Encouragement, and Correction. Cause V.

Instruction is very much neglected, as I shall more particularly shew, when I come to speak of the Education of Youth with reference to Religion. Parents seldom give good Directions to their Children, to teach them how they ought to live. They do worse, they train them up to ill things, and give them bad Instructions. By the Discourse and the Maxims they utter in the hearing of their Children, they infuse Sentiments and Principles of Covetousness, Pride, Sensuality and Dissimulation into them; they teach them to act upon the Motives of Interest and Passion, or by the Notions of a false Honour. Nay, they do sometimes directly teach them Vice, they encourage them to Lye and Cheat, to be revengeful and Passionate. So that Young People are not only destitute of good Instructions, but they are besides, infected from their Infancy with several most pernicious Principles. I need not say, what the Consequences of such an Education are like to be.

If few Children are formed to Virtue by Instruction, few are made Virtuous by the good Example of their Parents. It is much when this Example is not bad and dangerous. In most Families Children see nothing that savours of Christianity, except some external Acts of Religion; they observe that every one of the Family is employed about Temporal Things; the Discourses they hear, turn altogether upon Interest,

Part II. Intereſt, or ſome trifling Subject. They are Witneſſes of a great many Diſorders, of the Heats and Quarrels of their Fathers and Mothers, of their Avarice, their Swearing, their Lying, their Intemperance, their Impiety, and their want of Reſpect for Religion. Theſe are the Examples, which for the moſt part, Children have before their Eyes, and which corrupt them more than any thing elſe. At that Age almoſt every thing is done by Imitation and Example; and no Example makes more Impreſſion upon them, than the Example of their Parents, becauſe it is always in ſight; and they think beſides they cannot do amiſs, as long as they Copy after it.

It is very uſeful in Educating Children to encourage them. I mean not only that they ſhould be exhorted and incited to their Duty, and that, from the Motives of Honour and from the Pleaſure that attends the doing of it; but that likewiſe, we ſhould expreſs our ſatisfaction, and our love and eſteem of them, when they do as we would have them. A word of Praiſe, a little Reward, inſpires new Ardor into them. We may do what we pleaſe with Children, when we can prevail upon them with gentle Methods, and win their Love: They then accuſtom themſelves betimes to do their Duty, out of Inclination, and from noble and generous Views. But to uſe always Severity towards Children, and to take no notice of their Endeavours to do well, is the way to diſcourage them, and to extinguiſh in them the love of Virtue. Yet

Yet Severity is necessary, and upon some occasions we ought not to forbear Rigour and Correction. Those indulgent Parents, who being restrain'd by a false Tenderness, cannot find in their Heart to Chastise their Children, do infallibly ruin them. But if the want of Correction and Discipline makes Children unruly; Chastisement ill dispens'd produces the same effect. There are commonly three Faults committed in the Correcting of Children. Cause V.

The First relates to the Cause for which they are chastised. Correction should not be used but for those Faults, which have something of Vice in them; as when Children are guilty of Malice, of some ill Habit, or of great Negligence; and even then we should not proceed to Chastisement, but after we have tried other ways to no purpose. But this Rule is little observ'd. Children are punish'd for all sorts of Faults indifferently, and very often for small ones. They will sometimes be severely chastised because they cannot say their Lesson without Book, or for some other little disorder they have done in the House through Imprudence and without Malice; and at the same time Faults against Piety and good Manners shall be passed over. These Corrections produce several ill effects, and especially this, That Children form to themselves false Notions of their Duty. They fancy that the Faults for which they are punish'd are the most considerable, and that there is more hurt in spoiling their Cloaths, or in missing a word of

their

Part II. their Lesson, than in Lying, or in Praying without attention, which lessens in them the abhorrence of Vice.

The Second Error, which relates to the Nature of the Correction inflicted upon Children, is, when no other Chastisements are us'd but those which make the Body smart. Such Corrections without doubt are useful and necessary, Because Children are chiefly moved by those things which strike the Senses; but they are not the only Ones to which recourse is to be had. To beat Children every time they do amiss, is to use them like Beasts. There are other ways of punishing and mortifying them. The most profitable Corrections are those, which excite in them Sorrow and Shame for the ill they have done.

Lastly, There is an Error in the Chastising of Children, when they are not corrected with Discretion and Gentleness, Prudence and even Justice requires, that regard should be had to the nature of their Fault, to the Disposition they are in, and to other Circumstances; and it becomes that Love which a Father owes his Children, to correct them with Lenity and Moderation, and to forbear excessive Severities. Children should perceive the Tenderness of their Parents even in their Corrections, and be made sensible that it is with Reluctancy, and only in order to their Good, that they treat them with some Rigour. If Chastisements were dispensed with these Cautions, they would at the same time that they cause

Pain

Pain, beget in Childrens Minds, a Sorrow for having done amiss, and that would make them love their Parents, even while they are punishing them. But for the most part, Parents, or those who have an Authority over Children, chastise them without Discretion, and with a Rigour which borders upon Cruelty; they punish them rather out of Passion, Spite or Revenge, than upon wise and sober Consideration. Such a proceeding discourages and provokes Children, and it makes them hate their Duty. I confess this method may strike Terror into them, and curb them a little, but they grow the more stout and incorrigible by it, and they will certainly run into Licentiousness, as soon as they are no longer restrain'd by the fear of Punishment. Cause V.

From what has been said hitherto, it is plain, that Mens Corruption is a consequence of the Education they had in their Youth: But this will yet more evidently appear by the Reflections I am now going to make, upon the way of bringing up Children in Religion and Piety.

We are here to consider Education, in reference to the two Ends of it, which are the Educating of Youth, First in the Knowledge, and then in the Practice of Religion.

I. The Considerations to be insisted on concerning the first Head, relate either to the Things which Children are to be Instructed in, or to the manner of Instructing them.

1. As to the Things themselves, there are

Part II. Two Articles upon which the Inſtruction of Youth ought to depend; and thoſe are the Truths, and the Duties of Religion.

The chief Rule to be obſerv'd with relation to the Truths of Religion, is to inſiſt upon thoſe which are the moſt neceſſary, and to give a diſtinct Notion of them to Children. And here two Faults are committed; The firſt is, when they are not Inſtructed in all the Truths which are to be known in order to be a Chriſtian; the ſecond is, when ſuch Inſtructions are propos'd to them as are unſuitable to their Age, or even uſeleſs.

To explain my meaning a little further; I ſay firſt, That there are ſome eſſential things, which Children are not at all, or but imperfectly taught. Among theſe we may reckon the knowledge of Sacred Hiſtory. Religion being founded upon Hiſtory and Facts, it would be requiſite that Inſtruction ſhould begin at the Hiſtorical part of Religion, and at the main Events which are related both in the Old and New Teſtament: So that Children might know at leaſt in general, the principal Ages of the World, and the moſt remarkable Things, which did happen from the Creation to the coming of our Saviour; what the Flood was, what were the Egyptian and Babyloniſh Captivities; what time *Moſes*, *David*, the Patriarchs and the Prophets lived in; what ſort of People the Heathens and the Jews were, and what kind of Life our Saviour led.

It muſt not be ſaid, that Hiſtory is above the

the Capacity of Children; for on the contrary, it is that, which is to them the eaſieſt part of Religion, which they hearken to with the greateſt pleaſure, and which they remember beſt. Nothing does more ſmoothly enter into their Minds than Hiſtory; all the things I have now mention'd may be taught them in a week, And this Knowledge is as neceſſary as it is eaſily acquired. A Man can never underſtand his Religion well, or be thoroughly convinced of its Truth, if he does not know the Facts which it ſuppoſes. We ſee that it was by the Means of Hiſtory that God choſe to Inſtruct Mankind, and that matters of Fact make up the moſt conſiderable part of the Sacred Writings. And therefore it is a ſtrange thing, that in Catechiſms and other Inſtructions given to Youth, Hiſtory ſhould be ſo little inſiſted upon. This is viſibly one of the Cauſes of that profound Ignorance, which the greateſt part of Chriſtians live in: This is the reaſon why they underſtand almoſt nothing of what they read or hear in Sermons, and why the Doctrines which they are taught make ſo little impreſſion upon them. Cauſe V.

Teaching Children Hiſtory, gives them beforehand, ſome Notions of the Truths and Doctrines of Chriſtianity; but yet theſe Truths and Doctrines ought to be propoſed to them ſeparately, that they may have a more diſtinct apprehenſion of them. Above all things great care ſhould be taken, to imprint upon the Minds of thoſe who are to be

Part II. Inſtructed: the knowledge and the belief of the Principles of Chriſtianity. But this likewiſe is not done as it ſhould be. In Catechiſms, as well as in Sermons, particular Truths are dwelt upon, and the general ones are touched only by the by. This is a Fault I have obſerv'd in the very beginning of this Work.

Now at the ſame time that Children are ſuffer'd to be ignorant about many important Articles, they are perplexed with divers uſeleſs, or not very neceſſary Inſtructions. Inſtead of limiting them to the eſſential parts of Religion, their Minds and Memories are fill'd up with many things which they may ſafely be ignorant of. Some would have them underſtand the Diſputes of Divines, concerning the moſt curious and abſtruſe Queſtions, and they are made to get ſeveral things by heart, which they do not underſtand, and which are of no great uſe. In the mean time Children learn theſe things and ſay them without Book, and being poſſeſſed with the conceit, that they are as many Articles of Faith, they rank among Divine Truths School-terms and Doctrines, of which they neither apprehend the Certainty nor the uſe. And thus having none but intricate Ideas about Religion: they do not perceive the Beauty, the Solidity, or the Excellence of it, and they have neither true Love nor Reſpect for it:

When Children are once inſtructed in the Truths of Chriſtianity, it is particularly neceſſary to acquaint them with the Duties of it. There are two diſtinct ſorts of duties in Religion.

on. Firſt the Duties concerning Divine Worſhip or Service: and then the Duties of Morality. The firſt are Adoration, the Honour which is paid to God, Prayer and Thankſgiving: But as theſe Duties may be perform'd either outwardly or inwardly, it is of very great moment to make Children apprehend, That Prayer and all other Acts of Divine Worſhip, ought to proceed from the Heart, that * *God will be ſerved in Spirit and in Truth*, and that without this the Worſhip which is paid to him, either in private or in publick, does only provoke his Diſpleaſure. It is not enough therefore, to tell Children, That they muſt pray to God or go to Church, and to teach them ſome Forms of Prayer to be ſaid at certain Times and Hours: All this is but external, and if we go no farther, if we do not carefully inform them, that true Worſhip is Internal and Spiritual, we ſhall make but Hypocrites of them, by teaching them to pray and to perform Religious Acts. The Faults then which are committed in this Point, are of great Moment, and we may eaſily perceive, that Hypocriſy and Indevotion are the Conſequences of this Negligence. The Religion of moſt Chriſtians conſiſts only in ſome external Actions; they think they have fulfilled their Duty when they have recited ſome Prayers, or been preſent at the Publick Worſhip of God, tho' in all they do of this kind, they have neither Attention nor Elevation of Heart; but this Error which is ſo capital, and yet ſo

Cauſe V.

* John IV. 23.

Part II. common, arises chiefly from hence, that Children are formed only to a meer outside Devotion and Worship.

Young People are not much better instructed in Moral Duties. I shall not enter here upon all the Considerations which the Subject might afford, because I have treated of the want of Instruction concerning Morals in several places of this Treatise, and particularly in the 1 Chapter of the first Part. Yet I must say, that this Defect proceeds from the Instructions which are given to Youth. Much greater care is taken to inform them about the Doctrines than about the Duties of Christianity. The Articles of the Creed, the Questions concerning the Sacraments, and the other Points of Doctrine, are handled and examined largely enough in Catechisms, and Controversy is not forgot; but the Ten Commandments are explained in so succinct and superficial a manner, that we do not find there so much as the Names of a great many Vices, Virtues and Duties. Children who should be raised up to Christian Perfection, are only taught the Ten Commandments, and from the Explication which is given of these, they gather that they should not be Idolaters, Blasphemers or profane Persons, that they should neither commit Murder nor Adultery, that they should not Steal or bear false Witness. But how many other Duties are there of which they have no manner of Notion? They are not taught what it is to be Gentle, Humble, Sincere,

Sincere, Charitable, Pure, Sober and Patient. Many Perſons becauſe they were never inſtructed in theſe Virtues which are the principal Ornaments of a Chriſtian, do not practiſe or ſo much as know them. We are to impute to theſe ſlight and defective Inſtructions, that Opinion which is commonly received, That whoſoever is free from thoſe ſix or ſeven great ſins forbidden in the Decalogue, is a good Man. Cauſe V.

2. The Succeſs of Inſtructions depends in the ſecond place upon the Method and way of Teaching. The Method of Teaching, ſhould on the one hand be clear and proportioned to the Age and Capacity of Children, and on the other, it ſhould be delightful, and fit to make them love Religion. By this, two Ends which ought to be amied at, will be attained; the Mind will be enlightned, and the Heart moved. What is clear informeth the Mind, and what is delightful wins the Heart, and inſpires into it a ſtrong Affection for Religion and for the Duties of it.

1. Perſpicuity is never more neceſſary, than it is in the Inſtructing of Youth. Children having no Ideas as yet of moſt things, and not being uſed to the ſignification of Words, cannot underſtand what is ſaid to them, unleſs it be delivered with much clearneſs and ſimplicity, and unleſs every thing be avoided, which may puzzle or ſeem obſcure to them. This Perſpicuity reſults Firſt, from the things that are taught. It is a certain Truth, that Whatſoever is eſſential in Religion, is always

Part II. clear and eaſie to be underſtood; and that on the contrary, Whatſoever is obſcure and difficult, is not very neceſſary. So that provided Inſtruction goes no further than eſſential Doctrines and Duties, it cannot be very hard for Children, to apprehend what is ſaid to them. Secondly; Clear Expreſſions, and plain and popular ways of Speaking, produce diſtinct Ideas in the Minds of thoſe who are inſtructed; but a dark or too high a Stile, figurative or learned Phraſes, ſpoil the Fruit of Inſtructions. Laſtly, Order and Method contribute mightily to Clearneſs. It is not fit that Children ſhould be loaded at firſt, with many Doctrines and Precepts. General Inſtructions, the Principles of Religion, and the ſimpleſt Ideas, ought to go foremoſt, and then particular inſtructions and more complex Ideas, may be propoſed; but ſtill with a due Regard to the Age, Capacity, and Progreſs, of Children.

2. Inſtruction is to be delivered in a delightful manner. This is the way to inſinuate our ſelves into the Minds of Children. Nothing wins more upon them, than a ſweet and pleaſant way of ſpeaking, and nothing gives them ſo much diſguſt, as roughneſs and ſeverity. If Religion was repreſented to them with an attractive Aſpect, they would certainly embrace it with eagerneſs. But for the moſt part thoſe who teach or ſpeak to them of Religion, do it with an Air of Severity, and a diſmal Tone, and with thoſe Circumſtances, which make them averſe to it. Com-

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mands, Threatnings, and Conſtraint are uſed, to make them take their Catechiſms or ſay their Prayers; if they fail to do this, their Teachers are angry and beat them. When we exhort them to Piety, inſtead of going about this with ſuch a Gentleneſs as might make Virtue amiable to them, we ſpeak in a harſh and chiding manner. The Effect of this is, that Children ſeeing nothing in Religion that is inticing, take up a Prejudice againſt it; they look upon that Inſtruction, to which they are compelled, as a hard piece of Labour and Drudgery. Religion is no ſooner mentioned, but it damps their good humour, they do nothing but by Conſtraint aud againſt their Will; they free themſelves from that Conſtraint aſſoon as they can, and they bear during their whole Life an Averſion, or at leaſt, an Indifference to Religion. Cauſe V.

II. I have been diſcourſing hitherto, of what relates to the Knowledge of Religion, and I hope I have clearly proved, that generally ſpeaking, Children are ill inſtructed. I am now to conſider Education with relation to Practice. For it would be to no purpoſe, to infuſe into young People, a perfect Knowledge of the Truths and Duties of Religion, if they were not taught to make a good uſe of that Knowledge, and to direct it to its true End, which is the Practice of Virtue and Piety. But it is ſeldom that the Care of Parents, and of thoſe who have the inſtructing of Children, goes ſo far. If they take ſome

Care

Part II. Care about their Instruction, they generally neglect them as to the practical Part, and they little enquire whether they live according to the Precepts of Religion. Now Instructions thus dispensed, do not only prove useless, but they may likewise make Children doubly wicked, and fill them with the most dangerous Prejudices. When Children observe that Religion is proposed to them only, in an Historical and Speculative Manner, and that provided they remember what is told them, and are able to give an Account of it, they are commended for being well skilled in Religion; and that as for the rest, they are permitted to live as they please, and that they are not chid, tho' they do not practise what they were taught; they conclude from all this, that Religion consists wholly, in the Knowledge and Profession of certain Truths and that it is not absolutely necessary to frame their Lives according to the Rules of the Gospel. They accustom themselves besides to slight their Knowledge, and to act against the Principles of their own Consciences. These pernicious Sentiments are infused into Children, when Instructions are not directed to Practice. To prevent so great an Evil, these Rules are to be observed.

1. The Design of proposing the Truths and Doctrines of Christianity to Children, should be to beget in them a love and a respect for them; and in order to that, we should let them see, their Certainty, their Importance, and their Use. It ought then

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to be carefully inculcated to them, that there is nothing more true and certain, nothing of greater Importance, or that concerns us nearer than Religion, and that in Comparison with it, all that we see in the World, is of very little or no Consequence; and lastly, that it was revealed for no other End, but to make us good, and to conduct us to the highest Blessedness. By this Method, Instruction will always terminate in Practice. By teaching Children to know God, we shall excite in them a Love and Reverence towards that Supreme Being. By speaking to them of Providence, we shall make them apprehend that God sees every thing, and what Reason we have to depend upon, and to fear him. By telling them the History of the Bible, we shall make them observe in those various Events, the Effects of God's Wisdom, of his Goodness Power and Justice. In explaining to them the Doctrine of the Sacraments, we shall chiefly apply our selves to make them understand, what these sacred Ceremonies oblige Christians to, what an August and Venerable thing Baptism is, and what Purity is required in those who are baptized: And so when we speak to Children of Christ and his Sufferings, of the Resurrection and a future Judgment, of the Punishments and Rewards of another Life, and of all the other Truths, we should do it in such a manner, as may stir them up to Piety and Holiness. Cause V.

2. In the next place we ought to engage

Part II. Children to the Practice and Obſervation of the Duties of Chriſtianity, with relation both to Worſhip and Manners. And firſt it is altogether neceſſary, to teach them to render to God the Worſhip that is due to him. There are few Chriſtian Families, where ſomething is not done with this Intention. Children are made to learn ſome Prayers, to ſay them Mornings and Evenings, and to be preſent at the publick and private Exerciſes of Piety. But the main ſhould be, to bring them to ſincerity in Divine-Service, leſt they fall into Impiety and Hypocriſy. The greateſt endeavour ſhould be, to accuſtom them to Pray with attention and Reverence. This may at firſt ſeem difficult; we neither ſee the Heart of Children, nor can regulate the motions of it. But yet I think there are ways to fix their Minds, which might be ſucceſsfully uſed: And I hope my Readers will not think it amiſs if I dwell a little upon this Head, conſidering the importance of it.

1. I Would not have Children Pray, before they have ſome knowledge of what they are doing. There is a Cuſtom eſtabliſhed every where, which I look upon as the firſt Cauſe of Indevotion; and that is, to make little Children recite Prayers, and long ones too. I do not apprehend the uſe of this, nor where the inconvenience would be, if Children did not Pray at an Age when they can hardly ſpeak an articulate Word. It would be time enough to make them Pray, when they are capable of ſome Reflection. If we did wait

till then they might Pray with Attention; and, I make no doubt, but they would do it with Pleasure and Reverence. Children think it an Honour to do what is done by Men; if therefore they were not permitted to Pray till they came to a certain Age, they would look upon Praying as a particular Priviledge. But when they are made to Pray before they have any sense of what they do, it puts this Notion into their Heads, that Praying is nothing else but reciting of Prayers: And besides, that Obligation which is laid upon them, to perform regularly a Duty, of which they do not yet understand the Necessity or the Use makes that they only observe it out of Custom. Cause V.

2. I could wish that when we begin to make Children Pray, we should Teach them plain and short Prayers, wherein they might say nothing but what they understood. Two or Three Sentences are enough in those beginings, and as they grow in Years, longer Prayers may be prescribed them. Brevity is to every Body a help to Devotion; but Children being not capable of a long attention, it is certain, that long Prayers are not at all fit for them.

3. It would be very useful to Discourse with them about the Excellency and the Necessity of Prayer, and to make them apprehend what an Honour it is for us, to speak to God and to lay open our Necessities before him.

4. In order to accustom Children, to look upon Prayer with Reverence, and to go about it with Seriousness; they should not be allowed

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Part II. to Pray when they are ſtrongly poſſeſſed with ſome Paſſion, or Object, or when they have committed a conſiderable Fault againſt Piety.

5. It is particularly neceſſary to regulate and obſerve their behaviour and looks, while they are at Prayers, and then likewiſe to expreſs a Reverence our ſelves, and to ſay or do nothing that may give them any diſtraction. It is a Cuſtom as bad, as it is ordinary in Families, to go to and fro, to be buſy and to talk all the while that Children are ſaying their Prayers. How is it poſſible that amidſt all that noiſe, which would even hinder older People to pray as they ought, Children, whoſe Thoughts are ſo rambling, ſhould not be diſtracted? And what Reverence can be expected from them about the Exerciſes of Piety, when their Fathers and Mothers who are preſent ſhew none at all? This is what I have to obſerve, concerning Prayer, which is the principal part of Divine Worſhip.

As to what concerns the Duties of Morality, very particular care ought to be taken, to make Children obſerve them. The firſt mean to be uſed next to Inſtruction, is to exhort them to the practice of Virtue, and to repreſent to them, that Piety and Holineſs are the eſſential Characters of a Chriſtian. But the Exhortations directed to them will have no great effect, if they are not diſpenſed with Prudence. Sometimes Parents ſpoil all, tho' they mean well. They Exhort and Chide at every turn, they are perpetually Admoniſhing and

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Moralizing; by this they give a diſguſt to their Children, inſtead of winning upon them. Exhortations ought to be accompanied with Diſcretion and Gentleneſs; above all, we ſhould endeavour to perſuade and to prevail upon Children by Reaſon, that ſo being convinced in their own Hearts of the Juſtice Beauty and Uſefulneſs of Virtue, they might practiſe it of their own accord, out of Inclination and with Pleaſure. Cauſe V.

That we may be able to Exhort Children as is fitting, it is requiſite to be well acquainted with their Temper, and to obſerve which are their predominant Inclinations; that if thoſe Inclinations are good, they may be cultivated, and if bad corrected. And it is eaſy to know the Temper of Children, becauſe they deal ingeniouſly, and have not yet learned the Art of Diſſembling. If Men did make this their Study, if they did take hold of the good Diſpoſition which may be in Children, if they did apply themſelves to oppoſe the predominant Faults, to which either their Age or their Conſtitution inclines them; they would preſerve them from many Vices, and make them great Proficients in Virtue.

beſides this, Parents either by themſelves or others, ought to watch over the Conduct of their Children, and to enquire ſtrictly, whether they practiſe the Leſſons which are given them, whether they are afraid of doing ill things, whether they forbear thoſe Faults for which they have been reprov'd, whether they

Part II. they reſiſt thoſe vicious Inclinations, whether they are gentle, ſober, humble and moderate in their Diſcourſes, Actions, and Behaviour. To this end, it is very proper, that they ſhould not have too much liberty, and that they ſhould be for the moſt part under the Eye of ſome wiſe Perſons, who may obſerve their Deportment. I do not enlarge upon theſe Conſiderations, becauſe they would carry me too far; neither do I ſpeak here of Encouragement, Correction, and Example, nor of ſome other Means which might be very uſefully taken in hand for regulating the conduct of Children, becauſe tehſe have been ſpoken to already.

There is ground enough to conclude from what has been ſaid, that Corruption proceeds primarily and chiefly from the ill Education of Youth. The ordinary Education of Children being not Chriſtian, what wonder is it, that true Chriſtianity and ſolid Virtue ſhould be ſo ſcarce? The firſt Impreſſions are the ſtrongeſt. The Principles which have been imbibed in the firſt Years of Life, do not wear out afterwards; and thoſe who had not a good Education, are not often known to be wiſe and regular in their Conduct.

Let it not be objected here, what many are wont to alledge upon this Subject, That the Errors of Education are not ſo conſiderable, but that they may be corrected afterwards, and that Wiſdom comes with Years. Thus thoſe Men reaſon who only examine things ſuperficially; but ſuch Perſons did never ſe-

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riouſly reflect upon Man's Temper, upon the manner how ill habits are formed, or upon Experience. Almoſt all good or ill Habits begin in Infancy, and they grow ſtronger afterwards. The Age which ſucceeds Youth is ſo far from ſupplying the Defects of Education, that on the contrary, the longer a Man lives, the more difficult it is for him to return to Virtue, if he did not ſet out well at firſt. For beſides, that Habits are then ſtronger and deeper rooted, Buſineſs does alſo come with Age and People have no longer that leiſure and freedom, which they had when they were young. Thoſe therefore who do not take right Meaſures early, and who lanch into the World with ill Principles, are ſtill growing worſe inſtead of amending. This is verified by daily experience. Age ſeldom alters Men for the better. Cauſe V.

I do not deny, but that People who were neglected in their Infancy, or whoſe Youth has been unruly, are ſomtimes known to change their Manners and their Conduct, when they come to a riper Age. But we are to conſider how this Change happens, and what the Nature of it is. In ſome it is a thorough Change and a ſincere return to Virtue. God ſometimes works Converſion in the greateſt Sinners; and he does this commonly by Afflictions, Sickneſſes and Pains. But ſuch kinds of Converſion are not very frequent. The Change which we think we obſerve both in our ſelves and others, is not always ſincere;

Part II. it is often no more than an effect of Age, of the State we are in, or of Cuſtom.

Age does Two Things, it deadens the Paſſions, and it changes them. In the heat of Youth Paſſions are violent, and make a great ſtir; when the prime of Life is over, a Man perhaps is no longer a Libertine or a Deboſhee; but his Exterior only is reformed. The ſame Principle of Corruption remains in his Heart. He that was Senſual and given to Lewdneſs, moderates himſelf; but ſtill his Heart and his Imaginations are defiled. He that was Profane and Impious, does no longer profeſs Libertiniſm openly, he practiſes ſome Duties of Religion. But for all that, he has no more Devotion, or Faith than before. Age does likewiſe change Mens Paſſions and Inclinations. Young People have their Paſſions, and ſuppoſing theſe ſhould abate about Forty or Fifty, or even that they ſhould be quite left off, which yet happens but ſeldom; there are other Paſſions which ſucceed thoſe of Youth, and which work the ſtronger, becauſe they are not ſo much miſtruſted, and becauſe they make leſs noiſe, and are hid under the pretence of a Lawful Calling. Thus we ſee often that Libertines and Deboſhees, end with Ambition and Covetouſneſs. The World calls the Change which is obſerved in thoſe Men, Converſion and Amendment. A Man is ſaid to be reclaimed from the Errors of his younger Days, when his Conduct is no longer Scandalous, or manifeſtly Criminal; but

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if he is free ftom the Faults of his Youth, he is guilty of others, which he had not then. He is no longer Diſſolute, but he is a Slave to Ambition, he is Covetous, Unjuſt, and wedded to the World, more than ever. Nay, all things well conſidered, he is worſe than he was in his youth; ſince he has run from one Vice into another, and loaded himſelf with the Sins of the ſeveral Stages of Life. We are not to imagine, that every alteration which Age makes in Mens Conduct and Manners is a true Converſion. Cauſe V.

The various States, Callings, and Profeſſions of Men, do likewiſe put many of them upon altering their way of Living and make them give over thoſe Exceſſes to which they have been addicted for ſome time. As ſoon as a Man comes to be the Maſter of a Family, or to be preferred to Places, he muſt of neceſſity grow more regular in his Conduct, and forſake ſeveral Diſorders which he allowed himſelf in before. He becomes more ſerious, he applies himſelf cloſer to labour, he lives more retired, and he takes leave of the Amuſements of Youth. Honour, Decency, Intereſt, the neceſſity of making a Family, and other Conſiderations, oblige him to this; but Religion has not always a ſhare in this Change.

Laſtly, a Habit of Sinning does often blind and harden Men to that degree, that they imagine, there is a ſincere Amendment in them, when there is none at all; nay, when they are more Corrupt than when they were young. Men at firſt are ſenſible of their

Part II. Faults, Conſcience checks them for the ſins they commit; but in proceſs of time they perceive them no more; Conſcience grows ſeared, and they Sin without being aware of it. Habits ſeldom fail to produce this Effect, of which we ſee a Thouſand Inſtances in old Sinners.

All this ſhews, that the Foundations of the Conduct of our whole Lives are laid in Youth, and that the chief reaſon why Men live ill, is becauſe they have not been well Educated.

I do not think it neceſſary to mention the Remedies of this Cauſe of Corruption: I have obſerved them all along, in ſhewing the Faults which are committed in the Education of Youth: I ſhall only add, before I diſmiſs the Subject, that all this does properly concern Maſters of Families and Paſtors.

It were therefore to be wiſhed, in the firſt place, that Parents would take more Care than they do, to Breed their Children well, and that in this, they would proceed by the Rules which Reaſon and Religion preſcribe. They are miſtaken if they think they may excuſe themſelves from this Obligation, which both Nature and Piety lay upon them, and which cannot be neglected without a Sin. But the Careleſneſs of Parents in this Point, may very juſtly be wondered at; the Education of their Children is generally that of all things which they mind the leaſt, and the reaſon of it is, that they themſelves want Religion and Piety.

It would be requiſite in the next place, that Paſtors ſhould diſcharge their Duty with relation

tion to young People, and that to this end in all Places and Churches, the neceſſary Order and Method were eſtabliſhed for inſtructing the People and particularly Children. I remark this, becauſe in this reſpect things are not well ordered, ſo that in many Places ſuch helps and means are very much wanting. It is well known, that the opportunities of Inſtruction and the helps to Piety are mighty ſcarce in the Country and in Villages. Schools are there managed at a very ordinary rate, and many Places have no School at all, whereby it happens that many Perſons cannot ſo much as read. There likewiſe, Divine Service is but ſeldom performed, and very careleſly too. The Miniſters who are appointed in thoſe Places, are generally either Men of little worth, or Men who do not watch over their Flocks as they ought, and who are remiſs in the Exerciſe of their Office. Theſe are the eſſential Defects which ſhould be remedied, by thoſe who have Authority in Church or State. Cauſe V.

Above all, it is requiſite that Church-Men ſhould have a ſtrict inſpection over Schools and Families, and that Catechiſings were more frequent then they are. Young People ought to be the chief objects of the care of Paſtors; no part of their Office is more uſeful, or rewards their Labours with better ſucceſs than that. Their endeavours to mend thoſe who are come to Age, are for the moſt part to little purpoſe, but what they do for Children is of great benefit. If therefore they have a

Part II. Zeal for the Glory of God, and if they wiſh to ſee a change in the face of the Church, let them apply themſelves to the Inſtructing of youth, and make it their Buſineſs to form a New generation.

Among the particular Eſtabliſhments which might be made, for the edification of the Church and the benefit of young People there is one which would be of great uſe, and which ſeems to be abſolutely neceſſary. And that is, that with relation to Children, who have attained the Age of diſcretion, the ſame order ſhould be obſerved for their admiſſion to the Sacrament, which was practiſed in the Primitive Church, when Catechumens were to be received into the Church by Baptiſm. This admiſſion was very ſolemn. A long Probation and Inſtruction went before it. The Catechumens were required to give an account of their Faith, and they bound themſelves by ſolemn Promiſes and Vows, to renounce the World and to live Holy. No ſuch thing is done at this day in the Adminiſtration of Baptiſm, becauſe young Children are Baptized; but what is not done at the time of Baptiſm, ſhould be done when they come to Years of diſcretion. And truly if there be not a publick and ſolemn Profeſſion, a Promiſe in due form on the Childrens Part, I do not ſee how we can well anſwer what is objected by ſome againſt Infant-Baptiſm, which yet is a good and laudable Practice. A Man cannot be obliged to profeſs the Chriſtian Religion, againſt

against his will or without his knowledge: This engagement is a personal thing, in which every body should act and answer for himself. When Children are baptized, they know nothing of what is done to them; it is therefore absolutely necessary that when they come to the years of Reason, they should ratify and confirm, the Engagements they came under by their Baptism, and that they should become Members of the Church out of Knowledge and Choice. Now the fittest time for such a Confirmation and Promise, is when they are admitted to the participation of the Holy Sacrament. Cause V.

The Order then which I mean is this: First that when Children desire to be admitted to the Sacrament, they should be instructed for some Weeks before, and that at the same time they should be informed of the Sacredness and importance of this Action, and of the Promise they are to make, that so they might prepare for it betimes. In the next Place, that they should be examined, and that they should publickly render an account of their Faith. This Examination being over, that they should be required, to renew and confirm in a publick and solemn Manner their Baptismal Vow, to renounce the Devil and his Works, the World and the Pomp of it, the Flesh and its Lusts, and to promise that they will live and die in the Christian Faith: And then that they should be admitted to the Communion by Benediction and Prayers.

It will no doubt, seem to some, That I

Part II. am here propoſing a Novelty, and that too not very neceſſary; that there is no occaſion for all this Solemnity; that it is enough to examine and exhort Children in private, and that this Confirmation of the Baptiſmal Vow is included and ſuppoſed in the admiſſion to the Sacrament. To this I ſay, that the order I propoſe will be thought a Novelty by none but ſuch as do not know what was anciently practiſed, and who call Innovation every thing, which does not agree with the Cuſtom of their Country or their Church. This is an imitation of the Ancient and the Apoſtolical Order; and beſides, this Eſtabliſhment being altogether ſuitable to the Nature of the Chriſtian Religion, as I have juſt now made it appear, it ought not to be rejected.

As for what is ſaid, That it is ſufficient if Children are examined and admitted in Private: I anſwer, That the Corruption of the Age we live in is ſo great, that in many Churches this Admiſſion, and the Examination which precedes it, is but three or four Hours Work, and ſometimes leſs. Paſtors and thoſe to whom this Function is committed, do often go about it very negligently; they content themſelves with ſome Queſtions, which for the moſt part relate only to Doctrine and Controverſy; they addreſs to Children general exhortations to Piety, but they take no care to inſtruct them in Morals, or to examine their Conduct; they do not require of them an expreſs Ratification of the Baptiſmal

tismal Vow. I know there are Pastors who do their Duty, but the best thing would be, to have this Form of Examination and Admission regulated in such a manner, that it might not be in the Breast of every Minister to do in this Matter as he thinks fit. And that all this might be done the more orderly, it would be fitting that according to the Practice of the Primitive Church, some Persons should be appointed on purpose to instruct Young People and Catechumens. What care soever may be taken of Children, and whatever may be done for them in private Instructions, it is certain, that publick and solemn Exhortations on the one hand, and Promises on the other, would make a much greater Impression upon them. They would then look upon their Admission with Respect, they would remember it all their Lives, and this Solemnity would prove as useful and edifying to the whole Church as it would be to young People. I offer this with the greater Confidence, because an Order like this has been settled of late in some Churches, and is there observed with extraordiuary Success.

CAUSE. VI

Example and Custom.

Cause VI.

THere is no doubt to be made, but that Birth, Education, and Imitation, are three general Principles of the Irregularities of

Part I. of Mens Conduct. The State in which they are born gives them a Byas towards Vice. Education, as has been shewn in the foregoing Chapter, cherishes and maintains in most Men that vicious Inclination: But Custom and Example give the finishing Stroke to Mens Corruption, and make Vice reign in the World with a Sovereign Sway. This Third Principle is so general and so powerful, that some have thought it the chief Cause of Corruption, and that we cannot better explain how Sin is propagated and transmitted from the Parents to the Children, than by saying, that this happens through Imitation. And indeed it cannot be denied, but that Men are particularly drawn into Evil by Example and Custom. if this be not the primary or the only Spring of Corruption, it is at least one of the principal Sources of it. And therefore I thought it proper to consider this Matter here with some Attention.

All that I am to say in this Chapter is founded upon these two Suppositions. 1. I suppose that Men love to act by imitation, and that Example is one of those things which have the greatest Force upon their Minds. But when the Example is general, and supported by Custom and Multitude, they are yet more inclined to follow it. They not only conform to Custom, but they think it besides just and lawful to do so. General Use is to them instead of a Law, by which they judge of what is innocent and forbidden.

And

And that which doth yet more forcibly determine them to follow Example and the greater Numbers, is, that they think it a Disgrace to do otherwise. So that the Fear of Contempt added to their Inclination makes them perfect Slaves to Custom. If some remnant of Knowledge and Conscience does not suffer them to imagine that there is no hurt in complying in all things with Custom, however they comfort themselves with the Thought that the Evil they do is not very great, and that if they are not innocent, they are excusable at least, when they can plead Example and common Practice in their own behalf. Cause VI.

I suppose 2*ly*. That Example and Custom are bad for the most part. This I think needs not be proved; and if it did, this whole Treatise might afford us sufficient Proofs of it, since Ignorance, Prejudices, false Maxims and all the other Causes of Corruption I have mentioned, are so many Dispositions, Sentiments and Practices, which are grown Customary, and are established by the most general Use.

But it is not so needful to prove that the multitude of ill Examples is very great, and that Custom is generally vicious, as it is to shew that under the shelter of Example and Custom, Corruption is still spreading farther in the World and in the Church.

In order to this, I shall consider the Power of Custom and Example, in these three Respects, With relation, 1. To Matters of Faith. 2*ly*, To the Order of the Church. To

And, 3*ly*.

Part II. To Manners. What I am to ſay upon theſe three Heads will diſcover the Source of thoſe three great Imperfections which are obſerved in the Chriſtian Church, I mean Error, want of Order, and the bad Life of Chriſtians.

1. Matters of Faith ſhould not be ſubjected to the Tyranny of Cuſtom. Religion does not depend upon Mens Fancies and Opinions: The Truths of it are eternal Truths, it is founded upon an immutable Principle, and it is not more liable to change than God who is the Author of it. And yet we ſee but too frequently, that in Religion as well as in worldly Affairs, Example is more prevalent than either Reaſon, Juſtice or Truth. Men do ſcarce ever examine things in their own Nature, but Cuſtom is the Rule of their Faith and Sentiments; by this Rule they determine what is true or falſe, what they are to believe or to reject. And this Prejudice is ſo ſtrong and Men have carried it ſo far, that Multitude and Cuſtom, are looked upon as a Proof and Character whereby Chriſtians are to diſtinguiſh Truth from Error, and to judge what ſide they are to chuſe in Matters of Religion.

What is the Reaſon why ſo many People do not perceive, that certain Doctrines are palpable Errors, and monſtrous Tenets? We wonder how it is poſſible in ſo learned and refined an Age as this is, that the groſſeſt Fables and Extravagances ſhould ſtill go down with Men of Parts, for Divine Truths and Adorable Myſteries. A Time will come, when Poſterity

sterity will hardly believe, that ever such Opinions were received, or that ever Men did in earnest Dispute for or against such or such a Tenet. It is only the Prejudice of Example and Multitude, which do blind Men at this Day: They have been nurs'd up and Educated in those Persuasions, they see them obtaining among numerous Societies, and that is the occasion of their Obstinacy in Error. Cause VI.

Nothing but this Inclination of Men to follow Custom, keeps up in the Church those Disputes which rend it into so many different Sects. The Principle and Design of most Disputes is no other, but that Men will maintain at any rate, the Sentiments of their Party; and by this means those who are in Error, instead of being undeceiv'd, are more and more confirm'd in it. Every body swallows without chewing, all that is profest in the Society or Communion in which he lives, and Condemns without Examination the Opinions which are maintained by small Numbers or by Persons of another Country or Society. Those who are prepossessed do not so much as make it a Question, whether they may not be mistaken, and whether the Truth may not be on the other side. It is to no purpose to alledge to such People the most invincible Reasons, to press them with expres Declarations of Scripture, or with un-answerable Objections; for either they do not attend to all this, or if they examine those Reasons and Objections, it is with a Mind full of Prejudices, and resolv'd before-hand

Part II. fore-hand to think them frivolous, and not to alter their Sentiments. They satisfy themselves with some sorry Argument, or wretched Answer. If any Scruples and Difficulties remain, they shake them off in a trice, and set their Conscience at rest, with this Consideration, that they follow the common Opinion; they make no doubt but that they are safe, as long as they side with the greater Number. Besides, the Advantages of the World which may be obtain'd by the adhering to the general Opinion, would fully determine them, if they were not determin'd before, and they easily persuade themselves, that their Spiritual Welfare and the Truth are to be found in that Party, which agrees best with their Temporal Interest.

2. Custom is likewise, the chief Obstacle to the restoring of Order in the Church. I could here make a long Article, if I would mention all the Defects, which may be observed in the State of the Church and of Religion, with relation to Order. But having done this already in the beginning of this Second Part, I shall only say in general, that nothing contributes so much to the maintaining of Disorder as Custom does. The most beneficial Laws and Institutions are look'd upon as dangerous Innovations, when they are not Authorized by Practice: Men dare not so much as attempt to introduce them. On the other hand, useless or ill Practices, are thought Sacred Establishments, as soon as they are confirmed by Time and Custom. If Men do but endea-

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vour to lay aſide ſome Ceremony, to make ſome alteration in a Liturgy, or in the Form of Divine-Service; It ſeems to many, that the very eſſence of Religion is ſtruck at. Thus it happens that Abuſes which are palpable, and acknowledged by all Men of Senſe, ſubſiſt for whole Ages and cannot be Reformed. Cauſe VI.

The difficulty of reviving the Apoſtolical Diſcipline, and of reſtoring, Church-Government and the Miniſtery of Paſtors, to the State they ought to be in, proceeds from the ſame Cauſe. Becauſe a certain Form of Eccleſiaſtical Government and Diſcipline, obtains in a Country, it is pretended to be the beſt and moſt perfect, in which nothing is to be altered, and thoſe are not ſo much as heard, who propoſe the eſtabliſhing of another. If any one thinks it a Fault to ſuffer Scandalous Sinners in the Boſom of the Church, if he thinks that they ought to be Excommunicated, and that Chriſtians ought to maintain no familiar Intercourſe with them; tho' ſuch a Man has the Laws of the Apoſtles on his ſide, yet he ſhall be called an innovator. Tho' he ſhould plainly ſhew the Inconveniences of the ordinary Practice, and the neceſſity of Diſcipline, from Scripture, from the Pattern of the firſt Chriſtian Ages, and by the moſt convincing Arguments; yet Cuſtom will ſtill be urged againſt him; the Divine Laws ſhall give place to common Uſage, and the preſent Practice ſhall prevail above that of the Primitive Chriſtians.

III. Example and Cuſtom have a great force,

Part II. force, eſpecially in thoſe things which concern Manners. Men are not altogether ſuch Slaves to Cuſtom in Matters of Opinion about Religion, becauſe Opinions are ſhut up within the Heart, but in Practical Things and in Manners, there are few Men who are not carried away by the Stream of the Multitude. People think themſelves excuſed from the Obſervation of the plaineſt and the moſt Sacred Duties, as ſoon as they cannot obſerve them without departing from Cuſtom, and ſo they conform to the common Uſe how bad ſoever it may be. Thoſe who Condemn the vicious and corrupt Manners of the Age, and practice the Rules of the Goſpel, who for inſtance abſtain from Swearing, and reprove thoſe who do it, who make ſcruple of Lying and of tranſgreſſing the Rules of their Duty; are look'd upon in the World as Humourſome People, and ſtigmatized with Odious Names and Imputations. If they plead the expreſs Commands of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; inſtead of giving up the Cauſe, Men will ſtrain the Scripture, and by forced Explications and impious Gloſſes, endeavour to fix a Senſe upon it which may favour the ordinary Practice. While Piety dares not ſhew it ſelf, Vice is reſpected, and bad Men carry it boldly every where, becauſe the Numbers are of their ſide. Maxims directly oppoſite to the Moral Precepts of our Saviour, are not only received and tolerated, but they are defended as innocent

sent for this ſingle Reaſon, That the generality of Men approve and practiſe them. This might be confirmed by Innumerable Inſtances. Cauſe VI.

We can hardly imagine any thing more contrary to the Precepts of the Goſpel, than that worldly Life which is led by many Chriſtians. They ſpend their whole time in the Cares of the Body, they wear out their Lives in Idleneſs, Gaming, Pleaſures and Divertiſements; they deny themſelves nothing, they make it their ſtudy to live Luxurioufly and to gratify themſelves. This kind of Life is inconſiſtent with Piety, but becauſe it obtains among Perſons of the higher Rank, it is very hard to perſuade thoſe who follow it, that they ought to quit it. It is by alledging common Practice, that Men defend a ſoft and effeminate Life, Faſhions contrary to Chaſtity and Modeſty, the too great familiarity of the Young Perſons of both Sexes, the reading of ill Books, the Plays which wound Honeſty and Religion, ſcandalous Diverſions, and thoſe Aſſemblies where the moſt inticing baits and allurements to Vice are to be met with, and where the Minds of Young People receive the moſt dangerous Impreſſions: All theſe Things, I ſay, are defended by Cuſtom.

So that when Luxury, and expenſiveneſs and ſtate in Apparel, Eating, or Furniture, are once eſtabliſhed; we endeavour to no purpoſe to bring Men to Chriſtian Moderation, and to baniſh that multitude of Scandals and Vices, which muſt needs attend ſuch kind of

Part II. Exceſſes. Thus in ſome Nations where Drunkenneſs is in Vogue, it is in vain to oppoſe ſo vicious a Cuſtom. In ſpight of all that can be ſaid againſt Drukenneſs and Intemperance, People are ſo far from parting with that Vice, that they fancy there is no ſin in being Drunk.

To put up no Injuries, to Indulge Revenge, to be tender and nice upon the Point of falſe Honour, to ſtick at nothing that can promote one's Fortune, to aſſume all Shapes, to diſguiſe one's Sentiments, and to ſupplant others: All theſe are Maxims which are followed without ſcruple, becauſe they are authorized by Uſe, and by the falſe Opinions of Men. It would ſignifie nothing to alledge to thoſe who are poſſeſſed with ſuch Sentiments, what the Goſpel enjoyns us concerning Patience, forgiving of Injuries, Humility, Sincerity, Juſtice and Charity; ſuch Morals will not be ſo much as hearkened to, becauſe theſe Matters are otherwiſe determined by Cuſtom. By the ſame reaſon it is pretended, that in Offices, in Trade, in Arts and in the various Profeſſions of Life; every thing which is uſually practiſed by Men in thoſe ſeveral Callings, may Lawfully be done. Nay, even an Oath is not ſufficient to undeceive People; moſt Men explain their Oaths and regulate their Conciences by the Example of others; they uſe all the Methods of Gain which Cuſtom has introduced, without enquiring whether they are juſtifiable or not.

When I ſpeak here of Cuſtom and Exam-

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ple, I do not only mean that which is eſta- Cauſe
bliſhed by general Uſe, but that likewiſe VI.
which is authorized by Men in Credit. The
Quality of Perſons produces the ſame effect that
great Numbers do; one ſingle Example has
ſometimes as much force, as the united Exam-
ples of a Multitude. All that is done and ap-
proved of by Princes, great Men, Magiſtrates,
and Perſons of Quality, is a Law to a great many
People. A ſmall Number of Conſiderable Per-
ſons, who join their endeavours to bring a
Practice into faſhion, is enough to make it in a
little time to be generally followed, how bad
ſoever it may be. This is ſo commonly ſeen,
that I think it needleſs to give Inſtances of
it.

I ſhall add Three Conſiderations, which
deſerve a very particular Attention; I have al-
ready touched them by the by, but I will pro-
poſe them more diſtinctly here.

1. That common Opinion, That it is ne-
ceſſary to embrace the Sentiments and the
Ways of Living which are received in the
World, is that which makes Corruption
ſpread and inſinuate it ſelf every where. Men
make it a Law to themſelves, and repute it
honourable to comply with Cuſtom. It is
laid down for a Maxim, That we muſt live
as others do, and accommodate our ſelves to
the Faſhions which are eſtabliſhed, and that
it would make us ridiculous, if in Behaviour and
Manners we ſhould differ from the Age and the
Place we live in. I do not abſolutely reject

Part II. this Maxim, becauſe it is capable of a very good Senſe. A Chriſtian ſhould not profeſs an unſociable Piety: He may lawfully obſerve certain Decences, and comply to a certain degree with the Opinions and Manners of thoſe he converſes with; nay, he ought to do this for the Intereſt of Religion and Piety. But ſuch a Compliance and ſuch regards become Criminal, when they engage him to act againſt Duty and Conſcience. If the Cuſtom be bad, he ought to depart from it, and to do in ſpite of it, whatſoever God commands; he does not deſerve the Name of a Chriſtian, who has not the Courage to do this.

And yet few People are capable of this Reſolution, the greateſt part is overcome by the temptation of the Multitude; the regard they bear to the Example and Judgment of others, produces in them a falſe ſhame which hinders them from doing their Duty, and prompts them to Evil notwithſtanding all the checks of Conſcience. And nothing is ſo fatal and pernicious in the ſtate of thoſe who thus comply with Cuſtom, as that they become ſuch habitual Slaves to it, that they are no more able to alter their Conduct. When a Man is once got into a certain Courſe of Life in the World, he purſues it, and he is ſtill engaging deeper into it, till at laſt he comes under a kind of impoſſibility of leaving it tho' he would; becauſe in order to that, he muſt break off thoſe Ties and Engagements, which he has been contracting for a great while; he muſt with-

withdraw from divers Companies, and enter quite upon another way of Living; now it is very ſeldom, if ever, that People can reſolve upon all this. Cauſe VI.

2. Even thoſe Perſons who are well diſpos'd, are ſhaken by Example and Cuſtom: I ſaid ſomething of this in the Chapter of Falſeſhame. A great many are ſatisfied, that the ſide of the Multitude is not the beſt, and that the Manners of the Age do not agree with Religion; but they dare not ſwerve from Cuſtom, the fear of being hated, reproached, or deſpiſed, reſtrains them, and frequently extorts ſinful Compliances from them.

I ſhall take notice to this purpoſe of what happens every Day to Young People, whom Parents have endeavoured to breed up to Piety and good Manners. When they firſt go out of their Father's Houſe, they are aſhamed and afraid of doing ill things, Sin raiſes ſome kind of horror in them. With theſe Diſpoſitions they lanch into the World, they are placed either in the Army or at Court. And there they do not find thoſe Maxims of Piety praſtiſed which have been infuſed into them, but they have only ill Examples before their Eyes. They ſee there Perſons who have been recommended to them for Patterns, of whom they are to learn how to behave themſelves, upon whom their promotion and fortunes depend, and who are reputed honeſt Men; they ſee ſuch Perſons I ſay livlng in a licentious manner. This at firſt ſurprizes and

Part II. troubles them, their Conſcience holds out for a while, but example does inſenſibly leſſen in them the Abhorrence of Vice, their good Diſpoſitions vaniſh in a little time, and at laſt they ſwim with the Stream, they embolden themſelves in ill things, and they become finiſhed Libertines. They do in like manner drink in the Atheiſtical Sentiments, which commonly are in faſhion among Perſons of Quality. If they are but told, That Men of Wit and Quality do not believe a thing, or, that they entertain any Opinion; that is enough to make them embrace that Opinion, and queſtion the Truths of Religion.

3. In the laſt place Men are apt to think that if Cuſtom does not juſtify, it does at leaſt excuſe Vice, and that if they do amiſs in the following the general Practice, it is but a ſin of Infirmity which God will not take notice of. This is the laſt refuge of a great many Perſons; they will own, That Mens Manners are very much depraved, and that there is little of true Piety among them, but they will ſay; this is the faſhion now a-days, this is the way of the World, and he cannot be very guilty, who does only what others do. Nay, ſeveral Men who are not Libertines, and who ſee what ſhould be done for the good of the Church, and the promoting of Piety, fancy themſelves under no Obligation to oppoſe Cuſtom. Their excuſe is, That it ſignifies nothing to ſtrive againſt a torrent. So that ſloth and timorouſneſs together, magnifying

nifying the difficulties which their Imagination represents to them, they make no efforts, and they let things go on at the usual rate. While Custom corrupts and blinds some, it intimidates and discourages others; and thus Vice and Disorder are still taking deeper roots. Cause VI.

Now two sorts of Remedies may be applied to this Cause of Corruption, to wit, particular and general Remedies.

The particular Remedies are those cautions which every body ought to use, to prevent his being seduced by Example and Custom. There are Two principal means for a Man to keep himself free from this Seduction, the first is to avoid ill Examples as much as possible, to withdraw from those Conversations, and to abstain from those Imployments which draw Men into Sin, and to chuse a kind of Life which may not engage us too far into the World; and on the contrary, to seek after good Examples, and to be conversant with Virtuous Persons.

* But as notwithstanding all these Circumspections, we cannot avoid being often tempted by ill Example, so we ought in the second place to arm and fortify our selves against this Temptation; by strongly possessing our Minds with the Sentiments which Religiou inspires. I have shewed elsewhere, what Judgment a Christian ought to make of Custom and Mens Opinion. It is evident, That God having

* See Part I. Cause III. Artic. II. 4, &c. Cause V. Art. II. about the end.

Part II. ſet us a Law, by which He will judge us, and having given us the knowledge of that Law, and powerful Encouragements to make it the Rule of our deportment; neither Example nor the Judgment of the World, can any ways excuſe us from doing what God commands, or deliver us from the Puniſhment which our Diſobedience deſerves. Thoſe who have a greater regard to Cuſtom than to their Duty, are ſo much the more inexcuſable; becauſe the Goſpel expreſly forbids us, to govern our ſelves by the Practice or Example of the Men of the World. St. *Paul* exhorts Chriſtians, * *Not to be conformed to this preſent World, not to walk after the courſe of this World, not to follow other Mens way of living; to renounce the World and the luſts of it.* Our Saviour enjoyns his Diſciples, *To avoid the wide gate and the broad way of the multitude*, and to ſtrike into *the narrow path which is walked in but by a few.* Theſe are Reflections, which every Man who believes the Goſpel, ſhould frequently and ſeriouſly make, and which ſhould ſerve him for Remedies againſt the Temptations ariſing from Example and Cuſtom.

There are other general Remedies, which tend to leſſen the number of bad Examples, and to alter the Cuſtom and Uſages which are contrary to the Chriſtian Religion. For tho' it may ſeem, that to go about the aboliſhing of that which is eſtabliſhed, by a general

* Rom. XII, Eph. II. and IV. Tit. II. Mat. VII. 13, 14.

Cuſtom

Cuſtom and a long Uſe, is to attempt an impoſſibility; and tho' we cannot expect that this Cauſe of Corruption ſhould be entirely removed, yet the Difficulty is not ſo great, but that it might in ſome meaſure be overcome. Cauſe VI.

This we might have Reaſon to hope for, if First, thoſe who know and love their Duty would diſcharge it with Courage, and if they did add to their Knowledge a Zeal ſupported by Prudence and Firmneſs. How great ſoever the Degeneracy of Men may be, there is ſtill ſomething in Virtue, which attracts their Reſpect and their Love. The Endeavours of good Men againſt Vice, are always attended with ſome Succeſs: If the benefit of their Exhortations and good Examples does not reach far, they may at leaſt be uſeful to their Families and their Acquaintance.

But ſomething more than this is requiſite to reform general Cuſtoms and Practices; and none can do this more eaſily and effectually, than thoſe who are raiſed above other Men, and who are in publick Stations. I ſay therefore Secondly, That if Chriſtian Princes and Magiſtrates, would uſe their Authority to this End, and be exemplary themſelves, the Corruption of the World would conſiderably abate, and bad Examples would neither be ſo frequent nor ſo forcible as they are. It is in their Power to baniſh the greateſt part of thoſe Cuſtoms which are commonly received, and to eſtabliſh contrary ones. The Care and Example of Paſtors are likewiſe a moſt efficacious

Remedy

Part II. Remedy. If they did inſtruct Chriſtians as they ought, if they did oppoſe the Corruption of the Age with the pure Maxims of the Goſpel, if they did ſet themſelves againſt Abuſes, if they did endeavour in publick and in private, to bring all thoſe that err into the way of Truth, if they applied themſelves to the inſtructing of Youth, and if their Manners were edifying and exemplary, there is no doubt but that they would ſoon ſtop the Current of Vices and Scandals. It ſhould be their chief Care to oppoſe Abuſes and ill Cuſtoms in their beginnings; becauſe when they have once taken Root, the Remedy is much more difficult. In fine, as Cuſtoms are eſtabliſhed by degrees, ſo they are not aboliſhed all at once, and therefore thoſe who do not ſucceed at firſt in ſo good a Deſign, ought not preſently to be diſcouraged and to grow weary.

CAUSE VII.

Books.

THIS is the laſt Cauſe of Corruption which I ſhall mention, but without queſtion, it is one of the moſt general and of the moſt remarkable. Books are as many publick Fountains, from which vaſt numbers of Notions and Sentiments which are commonly received among Men, and which are the principles of their Actions diffuſe themſelves into

into the World: And as it is impoſſible but that among an infinity of Books, a great many muſt be bad, ſo it is certain, that Books contribute very much to the keeping up of Corruption. If Men, as we have ſhewed in the precedent Chapters, are ignorant and full of Prejudices, if they have looſe and impious Notions concerning Religion, if great Defects are obſervable, both in the Lives of Chriſtians and in the ſtate of the Church in general; if the People are ill inſtructed, and Children are ill educated, the cauſe of all theſe Diſorders is partly to be found in Books. It is therefore a moſt important ſubject which I am to handle in this Chapter, but it is likewiſe a very large one by reaſon of the prodigious Multitude of Books, which I might have an opportunity to ſpeak of here. But I muſt confine myſelf to that which is moſt material to be ſaid upon this Head. I ſhall ſpeak 1. of Ill Books and 2. of Books of Religion. Cauſe VII.

The number of bad Books is infinite, and it would be very hard to give a Catalogue of them; but I think that among all the ſorts of ill Books none do greater Miſchief in the World, than either thoſe which lead to Irreligion and Impiety, or thoſe which are impure and filthy. The firſt attack Faith, and the other corrupt Manners.

1. The moſt dangerous of all Books are thoſe which attack Religion, ſuch are not only all the Books of Atheiſts and Deiſts, but ſuch are likewiſe all thoſe Works which tend to

Part II. to overthrow either the Authority of the Holy Scripture, or the Facts and Doctrines of Chriſtianity, or the difference between Virtue and Vice, or any other Principle of Religion. I rank alſo in the ſame Order the Books which introduce Scepticiſm, and the deſign of which is, to render the Principles of Faith or Morality uncertain and dubious.

Thoſe Books in which Impiety appears bare-faced, are not the moſt pernicious. Few Perſons ever durſt maintain Atheiſm openly, or deny directly the Fundamentals of Religion. And beſides avowed Atheiſts and Deiſts have not many Followers. Their Opinions raiſe horrour, and a Man's Mind rebels againſt them. But thoſe Men, who tho' they do not openly eſpouſe the Cauſe of Impiety, but pretending all the while that they acknowledge the exiſtence of a God and a Religion; do yet ſhake the principal Truths of Faith; thoſe Men I ſay, diffuſe a much more ſubtil and dangerous Poiſon, and this may be particularly ſaid of the Scepticks. In the main they drive at the ſame thing with the Atheiſts, they aſſault Religion with the ſame Weapons, and make the ſame Objections. There is only this difference, that the Atheiſt decides the Queſtion and denies, whereas the Sceptick after he has muſtered up all the Objections of the Atheiſt and ſtarted a thouſand Scruples, leaves in ſome manner the Queſtion undetermined; he only inſinuates that there is no ſo-

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lid Anſwer to thoſe difficulties, and then he concludes with a falſe Modeſty, and tells us, that he dares not embrace either ſide, and that which way ſoever a Man turns himſelf, he meets with nothing but Obſcurity and Uncertainty: This differs little from Atheiſm, and it does naturally lead to incredulity. Cauſe VII.

It is an aſtoniſhing thing, that Books containing ſuch pernicious Principles ſhould have been publiſhed, and that Libertiniſm in Opinions about Religion, ſhould have grown up to that pitch which we now ſee it at. The Enemies of Chriſtianity did never oppoſe it with ſo much Subtlety and with ſuch vigorous Efforts, as ſome Chriſtians do at this day. Some Books appear from time to time, which are only Collections of all the Objections of Heathens and Atheiſts againſt the Exiſtence of God, againſt Providence, the Divinity of Scripture, the Truth of ſacred Hiſtory, the Foundations of Morality, and many other important Heads; ſo that impiety is now arrived at its greateſt height. It might be more general, but we cannot imagine how it could riſe higher.

And this occaſions a very conſiderable objection. It may be asked, how it came to paſs that Incredulity and Sceptiſm, ſhould appear in ſo knowing an Age as this is, and that Men of Parts and Learning ſhould entertain ſuch impious ſentiments? It is neceſſary to dwell a little upon the examining of this difficulty, becauſe it is ſo apt to perplex many. The Infidels urge it with great aſſurance, and they pre-

tend

Part II. tend to infer from it, that Religion cannot ſtand a Philoſophical and Learned Age, and that none but the Mob and the credulous part of Mankind believe it. They ſay, that ignorant Ages were the moſt favourable times to Religion, that then every thing was believed, but that ſince Men have begun to examine Matters a little more narrowly they are become incredulous.

But any reaſonable Man who does not love wrangling, may eaſily be ſatisfied upon this Point. Firſt Infidels have no ground to ſuppoſe, that Men had more Faith, in the ages of ignorance than they have now; for this ſuppoſition is altogether falſe. There was but little Faith in thoſe Ages, for we are not to call by the name of Faith, a ſilly Credulity which made the groſſeſt impoſtures to paſs then Current, for certain, and even for Divine Truths. The infidels do likewiſe ſuppoſe falſly that the Learning of an Age more enlightened than the precedent, is prejudicial to Religion; for on the contrary it has done great Services to it. If ſome ſubtle Spirits have attackt it, a great many knowing and judicious Perſons of extraordinary erudition and eminent worth have illuſtrated and proved the truth of it, with greater Solidity of Arguments, than ever was known before. This muſt be acknowledged to the Honour of God, and for the credit of the Chriſtian Religion.

But it will be ſaid, That thoſe who make Objections againſt Religion, are learned; that they

they are Philoſophical Men, who in all other things reaſon true, and can diſtinguiſh truth from error. Let it be ſo; but then I ask thoſe who urge this Objection, how it happens that we ſee every day Men of parts and ſenſe, who yet will obſtinately maintain palpable Errors, and refuſe to yield to the Evidence of ſome Truths, which are clear as the Sun? To this nothing elſe can be ſaid, but that ſuch Men are not ſo knowing and perſpicacious as they ſhould be, or that they do not make that uſe which they ought of their Parts and Judgment. I confeſs, that indeed a Man muſt have ſome Parts and Subtilty to be able to find difficulties every where. But that Man makes a wretched uſe of his Parts, when they ſerve him only to wrangle about the moſt certain Truths. Cauſe VII.

Thoſe which the Infidels call ſtrong Objections againſt the Truths of Faith, are but for the moſt part vain Subtilties and meer Slights of Wit, which may be uſed alike upon all ſorts of Subjects. That we may be convinced of this, I ſhall only name here ſome of thoſe Truths or Matters of Fact, which are thought unqueſtionable, and which no Man, tho' he had a Mind, can doubt of. It is certain that the ſame Objections by which the infidels attack Religion, may be turned againſt ſuch Truths or matters of fact. The Subtilties of Scepticiſm may puzzle a Man, who ſhall maintain, that there was heretofore an Emperour at *Rome* called *Auguſtus*, or who ſhall

Part II. ſhall believe with all Mankind that Parents ought to love their Children, and that it would be a ſin to murder a poor Wretch who is begging an Alms; I ſay a Man, who maintains theſe Truths, may be hard put to it, before he can get rid of all the queſtions of a Captious Sophiſter. But does it follow from thence that this Man is miſtaken? Is it to be imagined that a Man can doubt in good earneſt whether or not there was ever at *Rome* an Emperour named *Auguſtus*, or whether Parents ought to love their Children? Will any ever be ſo extravagant as to believe ſeriouſly, that it is indifferent whether we cut a poor Mans Throat, or give him an Alms? The Subtilties of Arguments ſignify nothing againſt facts which are well averred, or againſt thoſe natural Sentiments, which are common to all Mankind. Now Religion is founded upon Facts, and its Principles are in part natural Truths and Sentiments, which we muſt needs feel and believe at all times. He that would deſtroy Religion muſt confute thoſe Facts and Sentiments, and Infidelity will never be able to do it.

Philoſophical Knowledge is very much extolled by the Infidels; they pretend chiefly to a great exactneſs in Reaſoning, and yet they viſibly run counter to right Reaſon, and tranſgreſs the Rules which true Philoſophy preſcribes. It is contrary to Reaſon, to judge that a thing is falſe or dubious, becauſe there are ſome difficulties in it; it ought to be conſidered, that no Man knows all Things, or

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is able to anſwer all Objections, and that what ſeems obſcure to one Man, will appear very clear to another. When we have Reaſons on the other hand to believe that a thing is true, when its Proofs are ſtronger and more numerous than its difficulties, and when there are Proofs which upon other occaſions are ſufficient to determine our Judgment, true Senſe requires that we ſhould yield to ſuch an Evidence. This Method is particularly to be followed, when the Matter in queſtion is of ſome moment. In ſuch things we are wont to govern our ſelves by the greater Evidence, and to chuſe the ſafer ſide. What can be therefore more Irrational, than to hazard Eternity, and to queſtion the Truth of Religion, upon ſuch Conſiderations as would have no weight with us, and as would not ſtop us a Minute in the Ordinary Affairs of this Life? Cauſe VII.

Further, it is contrary to the Rules of good Senſe, to paſs a judgment upon thoſe things of which we have no diſtinct Idea, or which we do not thoroughly know. Men who can give no account of the Operations of their Souls, or of a hundred things, they ſee before their Eyes, will yet talk at random about the manner in which God Acts, or foreſees future events; about what God ought or ought not to have done for the Orderly diſpoſing of all things; about the ends which that Supreme Being propoſes to it ſelf, and about the Means which may conduce to thoſe Ends. This is the height of Extravagance and Temerity, and yet

Part II. it is at this rate, that the Infidels Reaſon.

I muſt add beſides, That Men of Parts are ſubject to the ſame Paſſions with the Vulgar, and that thoſe Paſſions hinder them from diſcerning the Truth. Theſe Makers of Objections who pretend to Politeneſs and Wit, are not generally ſound at Heart, but they love Licentiouſneſs; they are not addicted perhaps to a groſs and ſhameful, but to a more refined Libertiniſm; they obſerve a little Decorum, but they do not reliſh the Maxims of Devotion and Piety, and they cannot endure to be tied to them. Vanity has likewiſe a great ſhare in their Conduct. A great many imagine, that it is for their Credit to diſtinguiſh themſelves from the Vulgar, and not to believe the things which are believed by the People: And when they have once embraced this way and ſet up for Scepticks in the World, they think themſelves bound in point of honour, to maintain that Character.

Men of Knowledge are ſometimes governed by many Prejudices, and falſe Motives. A preconceived Notion or a meer Circumſtance is ſufficient to determine them to the embracing of an Opinion. What has been ſaid of the Conduct of Princes, may be applied to the Opinions and Hypotheſes of the Learned. Wars and ſuch other great Events, upon which the Fate of Nations depend, and which make ſo much ſtir in the World, do not always proceed from Wiſe and Mature Deliberation; ſometimes they are but the

effect

effect of a Paſſion, of a Humour, or of ſome particular Circumſtance. Thus it is with the Learned: We think too well of them, if we fancy that they are always determined by the greater Weight of Reaſon. The Motives which prompt them to maintain certain Opinions, are often very ſlight. They are not ſenſible of this; they think themſelves guided by Reaſon, and they do not perceive the true Principle of their Actions or Judgments. If Infidels did ſtrictly examine themſelves, they would find perhaps, That their Scruples were firſt raiſed and have been maintained ſince, either by ſome Book they read when they were Young, or by the Love they had for ſome Perſons, or by their Averſion to others, or by ſome ill treatment they have met with, or by the Praiſes which have been given them for their Wit, or by ſome Prejudice they have conceived againſt Religion in General, when they heard it ill defended; or againſt certain Tenets which are particular to the Society they live in, and manifeſtly abſurd; or by ſome other Motion of this Nature. Cauſe VII.

If we call to mind in the laſt Place, what has been ſaid in the beginning of this Treatiſe, to wit, That few Chriſtians apply themſelves ſincerely to the ſtudy of the general Truths, and of the Principles of Faith; we ſhall not wonder that among ſo many, who never inquired into the Proofs of Religion, ſome ſhould be inveigled by the Objections of Libertines, and fall into Infidelity.

Part II. I have in a manner ſtept out of my way; but this Digreſſion is not impertinent, ſince theſe Conſiderations may ſerve as a Remedy againſt Incredulity and Scepticiſm, which ſome Authors would fain eſtabliſh by their Writings.

One would think that every body ſhould abhor thoſe Impious Books, but yet they are read and liked by many Perſons. Young People eſpecially, who for the moſt part love Novelty, and are inclined to Vanity and Licentiouſneſs, do eaſily imbibe the Principles which are ſcattered through ſuch Books: They are impoſed upon by the Genteelneſs, the Wit, and ſome kind of Learning which they commonly find there: Being not well grounded in Religion, they are ſtruck with the Reaſonings of Infidels; the very firſt Objection puzzles them; they begin to doubt of many things, and in a little time they become thorough-paced Scepticks. I leave any one to judge, what effects this may produce in an Age ſo prone to Vice as this is, and if Young People can avoid being Corrupted, when they are no longer reſtrained by Religion and Conſcience. There is no Condition more remedileſs, nor is there any State more deplorable, than when Incredulity is joyned with diſſoluteneſs of Manners. People then are hardly to be reclaimed; Age and ill Life fortify their Doubts and Scruples, and they continue in that State to their dying Day. This is the fruit

fruit which many reap from the reading of thoſe pernicious Books, but it is not all the Miſchief which is occaſion'd by ſuch Writings. They may fall into the Hands of many who have no great compaſs of Knowledge, and beget ſeveral Scruples in the Minds even of good Men. After theſe Reflections, I make no doubt but it will be granted, That no Books are more dangerous than theſe, and that to have the Confidence of Publiſhing them, is a ſuperlative Degree of Impiety. Cauſe VII.

II. The Books I have now ſpoken of, aſſault Religion and Piety in general, and by conſequence open a door to all manner of Diſorders and Vices. There are others which tho' they do not attack the Principles of Faith, do yet introduce Licentiouſneſs of Manners. It would be a long Work, if I ſhould ſpecify here their ſeveral ſorts, which are as many as there are Vices, Paſſions, or received Errors among Men: This is a Detail which I cannot enter into. Being then forced to ſtint my ſelf, I ſhall only ſpeak of impure Books: And I chuſe this particular Species of ill Books, becauſe the number of theſe is not only very great, but becauſe they are thoſe likewiſe, which do moſt generally Corrupt Men.

Their Number is prodigious. Firſt we have the Obſcene Books of the Heathens, which are not only read by Men, but are put likewiſe into the Hands of Youth. Some People are ſo infatuated with theſe Books, that

Part II. they fancy one cannot be a Maſter of the Greek or Latin, unleſs he has read all the Obſcenities written in thoſe two Languages; which is as extravagant an Opinion, as if a Man ſhould pretend, that whoſoever deſigns to acquire a thorough Knowledge of the French, or of any other living Language, and to be able to ſpeak and write elegantly in it, muſt read all the lewd Poems and all the ſcandalous Books which this Age has produced.

Secondly, Beſides impure Books of Pagan Authors, we have thoſe that are writ by Chriſtians. The World is over-run with Books of this Stamp, their Number increaſes every day, and their amazing multitude is one of the ſtrongeſt Proofs of the extreme Corruption of the Times. It is the laſt degree of Impudence to write in that Style, and then to diſperſe it in the World by the Preſs: The Diſſolution muſt needs be very great, when this is done ſo freely and ſo often as it is in this Age. Nothing can be imagined more laſcivious or execrable than ſome Books which have been, and ſtill are Publiſhed from time to time: Paganiſm did never produce any thing more abominable upon the Head of Impurity, than ſeveral Works which were hatch'd in the very Boſom of Chriſtianity; ſo that in this reſpect Chriſtians have no cauſe to reproach Heathens.

Theſe Deteſtable Books are not the only Impure ones, nor perhaps the more dangerous; vaſt Numbers of others are current in the World. What are ſo many Books of Love

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and Gallantry, ſo many Scandalous Novels either feigned or true, and ſo many Licentious Pieces of Poetry, but the productions of that Spirit of Impurity and Diſſoluteneſs which prevails in this Age? Nay, even Books of Learning which treat of ſerious Subjects, have a mixture of Impurity. This Infection is diffuſed through all ſorts of Books, and appears every Day in ſome new ſhape. Cauſe VII.

As the number of impure Books is great, ſo their effect is moſt pernicious; and none ought to wonder that I ſhould aſſign theſe Books as one of the general Cauſes of Corruption. No bad Books are more generally read than theſe, none can with more reaſon be called Publick Fountains of Vice and Diſſoluteneſs. The Miſchief they do in the World cannot be imagined. They prove to an infinity of Perſons, but eſpecially to Young People, Schools of Licentiouſneſs. It is by the reading of them, that Youth learn to know and to love Vice. That Age is prone to Pleaſure and to every thing that gratifies Senſe; and that Inclination is ſo much the ſtronger, becauſe it is cheriſhed and fortified by an Education altogether ſenſual, and becauſe Young People for want of good Inſtruction, have not much Piety, nor any great Averſion to Vice. From whence we may eaſily judge, That they are ſuſceptible of thoſe Paſſions which gratifie Senſuality; and that it is hard for them to reſiſt thoſe Impreſſions, which the reading of impure Books conveys

Part II. into their Minds. We ſee in Fact, that Uncleanneſs is commonly the firſt Sin and the firſt Paſſion which ſeduces Men in their Youth, and which engages them into Vice, for their whole Life: For it ſeldom happens but that all the Ages of Life, retain a ſpice of the Irregularities of Youth.

And yet for all that, theſe Books have their Advocates. Many Perſons reckon, That there is no harm either in reading, or even in publiſhing them. If we believe ſome Authors, who infect the Publick with Books full of Obſcenities; none but fantaſtical People, poſſeſſed with a ridiculous and preciſe Devotion find fault with thoſe that write upon this Subject. And in defence of their Opinion, they alledge this Maxim, * *To the pure all things are pure*; as if St. *Paul* who does not allow Chriſtians ſo much as to ſpeak an undecent word, did permit them to read and write things which are contrary to Modeſty, and may occaſion Scandal: From this Maxim they conclude, That there is nothing in thoſe Books that offends Modeſty or Religion; and they proteſt that for their part, the reading of them does not defile their Imagination. I do not know the particular frame of thoſe Mens Hearts; perhaps impure Ideas and laſcivious Objects, are grown ſo familiar to them, that they do no longer perceive, that ſuch Ideas and Objects make any impreſſion upon them. But it is unconceivable how People can pre-

* Tit. I. 15.

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ſerve a chaſte Heart, when they delight in Writing or Reading filthy things. After all, tho' the reading of ſuch Works ſhould have no ill effects upon ſome Perſons, there are a great many more who will make an ill uſe of them; and this is enough to make every Man who has any ſenſe of Religion to deteſt impure Books. Cauſe VII.

What I have now ſaid will be granted by many, but it will be thought, that to rank Books of Love and Gallantry among impure Books, and to condemn the reading of them, is ſomething too ſevere. I confeſs, that all thoſe Books are not equally bad, and that ſome do not hurt Modeſty ſo viſibly as others do. But yet there are not many, in which a Spirit of Impurity and Licentiouſneſs may not be obſerved. That Love which makes the Subject of ſo many Books, is nothing elſe at bottom, but an impure and irregular Paſſion, of which the Goſpel obliges us to ſtifle the very firſt motions. What the World calls a meer Intrigue of Gallantry, is ſometimes a pretty large ſtep towards the Sin of Adultery. Sin indeed may be diſguiſed in thoſe Books under another Name, and may be dreſs'd in a modeſt Garb, but that makes it ſlide the more eaſily into the Mind. It is dangerous to dally with things, which deſerve the utmoſt averſion of a Chriſtian; and it is almoſt impoſſible but that the horrour of Impurity and of every thing that comes near it, muſt inſenſibly abate, in any one who is addicted to

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Part II. ſuch Readings. There are two Maxims in the Goſpel which decide this Matter; the one is, **That we are to abſtain from the appearance of evil*: the other, that in things indifferent, we ought to avoid whatſoever may prove a Scandal or an occaſion of falling to any body, eſpecially when the Scandal may be foreſeen. Now here is at leaſt the appearance of Evil; it is certain that divers Perſons will make an ill uſe of thoſe Books, and by conſequence the reading and publiſhing of them cannot be excuſed.

But as if it were not enough to maintain, that the Books in Queſtion may be read without Sin; it is pretended beſides, that the reading of them is uſeful and neceſſary to open the Minds of young People. I do not deny but that it is a valuable Quality to have quick and well-faſhioned Parts, but there are other Books which may be read without danger, and which are much fitter to form the minds and Judgments of young People, than Books of Gallantry, the reading of which, every body knows, has often ſpoiled the Minds of thoſe who were given to it. The greateſt Miſchief that attends this kind of reading, is that it corrupts the Heart and ſullies the Imagination, at the ſame time that it opens the Mind. Now it were better to have a little leſs of that faſhionableneſs and politeneſs of Parts, which is ſo much eſteemed in the World, than to acquire it at the expence of one's Innocency.

* 1 Theſſ. V. 22. See Rom. XIV. 13. 1 Cor. X. *&c.*

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But ſome People do not ſtop here. They proceed ſo far as to ſay, That theſe Books are uſeful even in reference to Religion, and that they are proper to reſtrain Youth from Vice; becauſe we ſee in them the Follies and Misfortunes which irregular Paſſions betray Men into. I can hardly think that this is alledged in earneſt. It is a ſtrange ſort of Remedy againſt Impurity, to make agreeable Pictures of Love, and to repreſent minutely, and in a natural and inſinuating manner, all the Motions which that Paſſion excites in thoſe who are poſſeſſed with it. We muſt be very ill acquainted with the Tempers of Men, and particularly of young People, if we can fancy that the reading of ſuch Books, will put them upon Moral Reflections, and inſpire them with an averſion to Vice. Daily experience ſhews that nothing is more vain or falſe than ſuch an Imagination. Cauſe VII.

It will be ſaid, That at leaſt thoſe Books ought to be excepted, in which among Love-Matters and licentious Subjects, the Reader meets with fine Moralities; which may however ſerve for a Preſervative. But theſe Books are not much better than the others; nay, I cannot tell whether they are not more dangerous. Thoſe Moralities are very ill placed, and few People are the better for them. It is a very ſuſpicious kind of Morality, which comes from the Pen of thoſe Authors, who write indifferently upon Matters of Love, and religious Subjects; who ſometimes ſeem to be Libertines

Part II. tines and sometimes devout; who after they have said a hundred licentious things, given you the History of a great many Disorders, and related several scandalous Passages; entertain you with Devotion and Piety: This is a monstrous Mixture. If those Authors were truly religious, they would forbear writing those things which Religion condemns, and which scandalize the Publick. Such Books are particularly fit to confirm worldly Men in their Opinion, that Gallantry, provided it does not proceed to the highest degree of Crimes is no great Sin, and to persuade young People that they may easily grow devout hereafter, tho' they now spend their Youth in Libertinism. From all these Considerations I infer, That let People say what they will, all the Books which present their Readers with Impurity, either bare-faced, or under some Vail, are extremely pernicious.

Having thus discoursed of ill Books, I come now to the Books of Religion. It may seem at first, that I should rather seek in these the Remedy, than the Cause of Corruption. Indeed the end of religious Books should be to banish Corruption and to establish Piety in the World, and there are many of them which attack Ignorance and Vice with Success, and which may prove excellent Preservatives against the Corruption of the Age. But I hope no body will take it amiss if I say that there are Books of Religion, which do not conduce much to thae promoting of Piety, nay that some prove hind'rance to it. This

This I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew. I ſhall not ſpeak of any particular Book, I will only offer ſome general Conſiderations, which my Readers may apply as they ſee Cauſe. It is not my Deſign to rank among bad Books all thoſe Works, to which ſome of the following Reflections may be applied. Some indeed are downright bad, but many are in ſeveral reſpects good and uſeful tho' they have their Faults; and as good Books ought to be diſtinguiſhed from bad ones, ſo is it no leſs neceſſary, to diſcern what is good in every Book, from what is naught or uſeleſs. Cauſe VII.

The Books of Religion which I think ought here to be taken notice of, are of four ſorts. 1. Thoſe which explain the Scripture. 2. The Books of Divinity. 3. The Books of Morality. 4. The Books of Devotion.

1. It cannot be denied but that among the Books of the firſt ſort there are ſome very good ones, and that we have at this Day great Helps for the underſtanding of the Holy Scripture. But it ought likewiſe to be granted, that ſome of thoſe Books which are deſigned for the expounding of Scripture, do only obſcure and perplex the Senſe of it. It would be tedious to mention here all the Defects of that kind of Writing, I ſhall therefore obſerve only the Principal.

1. The Firſt and the moſt Eſſential is the not Expounding of Scripture, according to its true Meaning; and this Fault, which is but too frequent in Commentaries, proceeds chiefly from

Part II. from two Cauſes: 1. That Expoſitors do not apprehend the Scope of the Sacred Writers; and, 2. That they enter with Prejudices upon the Reading of Scripture.

The true way to underſtand the Scripture, is, to know the Scope of it, and never to ſwerve from that. Good Senſe and Piety, joyned with the Study of Languages, Hiſtory, and Antiquity, are here very ſerviceable. A Commentator ought in a manner to tranſport himſelf into thoſe Places and Times in which the Sacred Authors lived. He ſhould fancy himſelf in their Circumſtances, and conſider what their Deſign was, when they ſpoke or writ; what Perſons they had to deal with, and what Notions, Knowledge or Cuſtoms did then obtain. But thoſe who, being ignorant of theſe things, ſet about Expounding the Scripture, can hardly do it with Succeſs. It is a wonder if they do not miſs the true Mark, and if they do not obtrude forced, and very often, falſe Gloſſes upon their Readers.

On the other hand, many Authors apply themſelves to the examining of Scripture with a Mind full of Prejudices. They explain it by the preſent Notions of the World. Nothing is more uſual with Commentators than to make the Faithful under the Old Teſtament ſpeak as if they had been as well acquainted with the Truths of the Goſpel as Chriſtians are; and as if thoſe Queſtions and Diſputes, which are treated in Common-Places of Divinity, had been agitated at that time. When

those Expositors, for Instance meet with the Word *Righteous* or *Righteousness* in the *Psalms*, they fancy that *David* had in his thoughts all that Divines have vented concerning Justification; and upon this Supposal, what do they not say, or what do they not make Preachers say? It has been observed, That almost all Commentators are partial, and endeavour to put upon the Scripture a Sense that favours the Opinions of their respective Sects. This Spirit of a Party is chiefly remarkable in some of those Commentaries which these last Centuries have produced. Cause VII.

2. The second Rule of a Commentator should be, to expound clearly and familiarly the literal Sense of Scripture, and never to have recourse to a mystical Exposition, but in those Places where the Spirit of God directs us to look for it: And yet a great many Authors do almost intirely forsake the literal Sense, to pursue mystical Explications. In their Opinion, every thing is mystical in the Holy Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. They are not contented with unfolding the true Mysteries and Prophecies which manifestly relate to the Times of the Gospel, but they turn all things into Figure. They find Mysteries, Allegories, Types and Prophecies every where, even in the plainest Discourses. This they call searching and diving into the Scriptures. But this way of expounding the Word of God is a Fountain of Illusions: For as the Holy Ghost does not explain those pretended

Part II. pretended Myſteries, ſo they muſt be put to their Gueſſes and be beholden to their Imagination for the Diſcovery of them; and he that is the moſt copious or lucky in his Conjectures, is the greateſt Man. Now I leave any one to judge, whether Commentators, who follow no other Guide but their Imagination, can avoid being very ftequently miſtaken, and giving a great many handles to Libertines and Infidels.

3. We are not to forget here the School-Commentators. The Holy Scripture ſhould be expounded in a ſimple and popular manner; and this cannot be denied, if we conſider that it was given for the Inſtruction and the Salvation of all Men, and that the Diſcourſes of Chriſt and his Apoſtles were addreſſed to the Common People, and to ſuch Perſons as were far from being Philoſophers. Nothing therefore ſeems more repugnant to the Deſign of Scripture, than to explain it Philoſophically, and, which is worſe, according to the Principles of a falſe Philoſophy, as divers Commentators do. They make uſe of the Method, Notions, and Terms of the Schools, to find out the Meaning of the Sacred Writings. They apply to all Subjects the Rules preſcribed by the School-men. They carefully diſtinguiſh in a Text thoſe Things which are called in the Schools *Materia*, *Forma*, *Cauſa efficiens*, *Finis*, *Subjectum*, *Adjunctum*, &c. They ſeek in all Reaſonings the *Major*, the *Minor*, and the Concluſion, as if the Holy Ghoſt, inſpiring the Sacred

Sacred Authors, had followed the Scheme of *Aristotle*'s Logick, and had intended to make Syllogisms in Mood and Figure. I say nothing here of that Spirit of Dispute and Wrangling which runs through the Scholastical Commentaries, nor of the false Senses and metaphysical Explications, which they put upon the Scripture. Such Books are Obstacles rather than Helps to the understanding of the Word of God; they are fit only to perplex what is clear, and to spoil Divines and Preachers, by taking away from them that Qualification they have most need of, I mean, good Sense. Cause VII.

4. Another very different way from that Simplicity with which the Scripture should be handled, is the Method of those Authors, who without Necessity insist upon all the Circumstances of a Text, who sift all the Terms of it, as if a Mystery did lurk in every Word; who descend to the minutest Things and weary themselves in Conjectures and Questions. This Exactness is very useless and insipid. It may be sometimes necessary to clear a Difficulty, to unfold an intricate Meaning, and to observe the critical Signification of Words: But when the Sense is natural and easie, and when the Words are clear, to what purpose should a Man insist upon all those Illustrations? What need is there for him to be always pressing the Signification of Words, to remark all their different Acceptations, and to explain what is to be understood by the Words, *Death*, *Faith*, *Just*,

Part II. every time that theſe Terms occur. The true Method is to purſue the Things themſelves and the meaning of a Text, without criticizing upon Words and Circumſtances.

5. It is the Fault of many Commentators to be prolix and too large. From every Verſe, nay, from every Word, they take occaſion to run into a Common-Place, and to vent a multitude of Notions, ſo that they really give us Sermons, Diſſertations, or Lectures of Divinity, under the Title of Commentaries. I do not abſolutely condemn diffus'd Commentaries; we meet ſometimes with good things in them, but we find there likewiſe a great many which ſignifie nothing. When all is done, Brevity, Clearneſs, and Exactneſs, are infinitely to be preferred in a Commentary before Prolixity and Copiouſneſs: Such Length breeds Obſcurity and Confuſion, it makes Preachers lazy, it tempts them to fill their Sermons with a hundred needleſs things, it brings them to a Cuſtom of being tedious, of making Digreſſions, and of paſſing by that which is eſſential and ſolid: All which is very far from promoting the Edification of the Church.

Beſides, it is evident, That the Defects of Commentaries contribute very much to the Corruption of Chriſtians. The Holy Scripture is the Foundation of Religion and Piety; but Commentaries are the Stores from which the Senſe of Scripture is drawn, and from which Preachers commonly take the Matter of their Sermons. Few of them endeavour

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to find out the Senſe of a Text by their own Induſtry; they conſult their Commentaries like Oracles, and they blindly follow their Deciſions; it is therefore highly requiſite that theſe Books ſhould not lead into Error thoſe who have recourſe to them. When a blind Man leads another, they both fall into the Ditch. If then the Guides, to whoſe Conduct Preachers give up themſelves, are deceitful and falſe, the Word of God will neither be well underſtood, nor well Preached, and both Preachers and People will err. Cauſe VII.

II. It is with Divinity-Books as with Commentaries; ſome are good, and others bad. The diverſity of Opinions which we ſee among Authors, is a Proof of what I ſay: Some maintain as Divine Truths, Things which others reject as falſe and pernicious Sentiments; ſo that there muſt be no ſmall Error on one ſide or the other. All Divines will own the Truth of this Remark; but it is here of no uſe, becauſe it does not decide which Books of Divinity are good, and which are bad. Every body will pretend, that the bad Books are thoſe which teach a Doctrine contrary to that which obtains in the Society to which he belongs. In order to know who is in the Right, or in the Wrong, it would be neceſſary to judge here upon the Merits of the Cauſe, and to enter into the Examination of all the Controverſies which divide Chriſtians. But this I will by no means take upon me to do: It will be fitter for me

Part II. to take notice of thoſe Faults which are common to the greateſt part of Divinity-Books, I ſhall ſay nothing but what muſt needs be owned by all the ſenſible Divines of any Party; and the Reflections I am to make, tho' General, may perhaps be of ſome uſe to direct our Judgment concerning the Doctrine it ſelf contained in thoſe Books.

1. Almoſt all the Authors who have writ of Divinity, have made of it, upon the Matter, a Science of meer Speculation. They eſtabliſh certain Doctrines, they deliver their Opinions, they prove them as well as they can; they treat of Controverſies, and confute their Adverſaries; but they do not ſeem to have meditated much upon the Uſe of the Doctrines they teach, with relation to Piety and Salvation. They are very ſhort upon this Head, which yet is the chiefeſt of all; they are not by half ſo ſollicitous to aſſert the Duties, as they are to maintain the Truths of Religion. Now this is not teaching Divinity. The Deſign of Religion is to teach Men how they ought to ſerve God, and to make them Holy and Happy. If this was conſidered in the handling of Divinity, and if Care was taken to ſhew what Relation all the Parts of Religion have to the Glory of God, and to the Holineſs and Felicity of Man, there would be much more Piety than there is now among Chriſtians. Thoſe who ſtudy Divinity would learn betimes to direct it to its true End; and this would likewiſe be a means to diſtinguiſh material

material from inſignificant Points and Queſtions, and to eaſe Religion of all thoſe needleſs Diſputes, which are one of the main Cauſes of the Corruption of Chriſtians. Cauſe VII.

2. What I have now ſaid leads me to a ſecond Obſervation; which is, That as ſeveral things might be left out of Divinity-Books, ſo other things are wanting, which it would be neceſſary to add to them. For the Purpoſe, Common-Places do not inſiſt much upon the General Truths and Principles of Religion. They ſcarce give us any Inſtruction about Church-Diſcipline and Government, or about the Belief and Practice of the Firſt Ages of Chriſtianity: As for Morality, it is there touched but very ſuperficially. And yet theſe are eſſential Articles in Divinity, the Knowledg of which is neceſſary to thoſe who are called to preach the Goſpel, to guide a Church, or to direct Mens Conſciences.

3. Divinity-Books are, for the moſt part, too Scholaſtical. The Method of the School has been long in vogue; and tho' the School-mens ways of handling Divinity, may juſtly be looked upon as a Defiance to Senſe and Religion; yet that Method has prevailed to that degree, that for ſome Ages it was not lawful to ſwerve from it. Of late Years indeed the School-men have loſt a great deal of their Credit; and in Divinity, as well as in Philoſophy, many Perſons have no longer that blind Deference for them which was paid heretofore. Yet, for all that, a great Num-

Part II. ber of Divines do ſtill ſet up that Method for their Rule, and it is ſtill as it were ſacred in Colleges and Univerſities. Common-Places to this Day ſavour too much of the Barbariſm of the Schools, and we find there but too many Remainders of that dry and crabbed Theology, which had its Birth in the Ages of Ignorance. Inſtead of thoſe ſimple and clear Idea's, which render the Truth and Majeſty of the Chriſtian Religion ſenſible, and which ſatisfie a Man's Reaſon, and move his Heart, we meet with nothing in ſeveral Bodies of Divinity but Metaphyſical Notions, curious and needleſs Queſtions, Diſtinctions, and obſcure Terms. In a word, we find there ſuch intricate Theology, that the very Apoſtles themſelves if they came into the World again, would not be able to underſtand it, without the help of a particular Revelation. This Scholaſtick Divinity, has done more miſchief to Religion, than we are able to expreſs. There is not any thing that has more Corrupted the Purity of the Chriſtian Religion, that has more obſcured Matters, multiplied Controverſies, diſturbed the Peace of the Church, or given riſe to ſo many Hereſies and Schiſms. This is the thing which confirms ſo many Eccleſiaſticks in their Ignorance and Prejudices, and which keeps them from applying themſelves to the ſolid Parts of Divinity, and to that which is proper to ſanctify Men.

Now all theſe Defects are viſible Cauſes of Corruption, which may be proved by this ſingle

ſingle Conſideration, that it is in Common-Places that Church-men learn their Divinity: Suppoſe then that thoſe Books do not give them a true Idea of Religion, what Religion or what Divinity can ſuch Men Teach their People? One ſcholaſtick and injudicious Author who is in Credit in a Country, and who is patronized by a Profeſſor, is enough to ſpoil the Minds of Young Divines, and to bring into repute the moſt abſurd and dangerous Opinions and Syſtems. Cauſe VII.

Tho' Catechiſms are not uſually reckoned among Divinity-Books, yet it will not be uſeleſs to ſay ſomething of them here, Some great Men have beſtowed their pains upon Works of this kind to very good purpoſe; and yet in this reſpect there is ſtill ſomething to be deſired for publick Edification. 1. It is to be wiſhed that thoſe Subjects ſhould only be treated in Catechiſms, which ought to be handled there, and that all the Matters and Queſtions which are above the reach of the People and of Children, or which are not neceſſary to Salvation, ſhould be baniſhed from thence. 2. That ſome eſſential Articles, about which Catechiſms are very jejune ſhould be added to them, and particularly theſe Three; A general Idea of the Hiſtory of the Bible; the main Proofs of the Fundamental Truths of Religion; and an exact Explication of the Duties of Morality. This laſt Article is for the moſt part extremely neglected in Catechiſms; nothing can be more dry and ſuper-

Part II. ficial than what they ſay upon the Decalogue.

3. It would be fitting to make ſome alteration in the method obſerved in Carechiſms; for they are not all familiar enough: School-Terms or figurative Phraſes are uſed in them; which either the People do not underſtand, or to which they affix falſe Idea's. For inſtance, I would not have it ſaid, *That the Euchariſt is the ſymbol of our ſpiritual Nouriſhment, and of our Union with Jeſus Chriſt:* For beſides that this is not an exact Definition, this Style is not proper for a Catechiſm. Theſe Words *Symbol, ſpiritual Nouriſhment, Union with Jeſus Chriſt*, are figurative and obſcure Terms, Would not the thing be plainer both to Children and to every Body, if we ſhould ſay, That the Euchariſt is a ſacred Action and Ceremony, wherein Chriſtians eat Bread and drink Wine, which are diſtributed in remembrance of the Death of Chriſt, and of the Redemption wrought by him? In thoſe Works which are intended for Youth and for the common People, it concerns an Author to be clear and accurate, to omit nothing that is eſſential, to ſay nothing that is needleſs, to uſe plain and proper expreſſions, and to propoſe nothing but what is natural and eaſy to be apprehended. Catechiſms are deſigned to give Children the firſt tinctures and Idea's of Religion: Now thoſe Idea's, we know, commonly ſtick by them as long as they live; if then they are not clear and true, it is not poſſible for them ever to be well acquainted with their Religion.

III. The

III. The third ſort of Books are thoſe of Morality. This important Part of Religion which regulates Manners, has been treated with a great deal of ſolidity and force in ſeveral Excellent Works. Nay, it is obſerved, That Morality is more cultivated of late than it has been heretofore. But it were to be wiſhed that the good Books of Morality we have at this Day, were of a more general Uſefulneſs than they are. The beſt Works of this kind, are above the Peoples Capacity. There are various things in them, relating either to the Reaſoning Part, the turn of Thoughts, or the Style, which cannot be underſtood, but by knowing and diſcerning Perſons. Almoſt all the Able Men who write upon Morals have this Fault, That they ſpeak too much like Ingenious Men, and do not accomodate themſelves enough to the Capacity of the Readers. They do not conſider, That they ought to be uſeful to every body, that what ſeems clear to them, is obſcure to the greateſt part of thoſe who peruſe their Writings, and that a Book of Morality, which is only underſtood by Men of Parts or Learning, is of a very limited Uſefulneſs. They ſhould therefore, at leaſt in ſome of their Works, endeavour to ſpeak in a popular manner, and to handle Matters with all poſſible clearneſs and ſimplicity. This would be no diſparagement to them, and the doing it well would, I think, require all the Abilities, Parts, and Talents, of the beſt Writers: It is more difficult than Cauſe VII.

Part II. than it ſeems, to ſpeak or write in ſuch a manner, as that a Man ſhall ſay all that is proper to be ſaid, and at the ſame time be intelligible to all ſorts of Perſons.

But if there are good Books of Morality, there are many on the other hand, which have conſiderable Faults in them, and thoſe Faults are of great Conſequence, becauſe Morality ill Explained, is capable of doing more hurt than good.

1. An Author who Treats of Morality ſhould aiways have theſe Two Rules in his view. 1. To explain exactly the Nature of the Duties which it preſcribes. And 2. to perſuade Men to the practice of thoſe Duties. Now theſe Two Rules have not been ſufficiently obſerved by all theſe who have publiſhed Moral Books, 1. They do not always repreſent with due exactneſs the Nature of Vice or Vertue. Eitner the Notions they give of them are not true, or they are too general. On the one hand, they are not accurate enough, in deſcribing the true Characters of each Virtue and Vice; and on the other hand, they do not diſtinguiſh their various Kinds and Degrees, which yet ought to be done if they intend that Men ſhould know their own Pictures, 2. They do not preſs Men enough to the Practice of Vertue. The End of Morality, is to work upon Man's Heart and Paſſions. In order to compaſs this end Two things are neceſſary. 1. That all thoſe great Motives which the Goſpel affords, ſhould

ſhould be ſtrongly urged: And 2. that the falſe Reaſons and Motives which engage Men into the Love of this World and give them any Averſion to Holineſs, ſhould be Confuted. Morals cannot be uſefully haedled without the obſervation of theſe Two Maxims, the ſecond eſpecially: for the Reaſon why many are not prevailed upon by the Arguments and Motives which are offered to them, is, becauſe they are hindred by other Arguments and Motives. A Reader frames in himſelf a Hundred Objections againſt what he reads in a Book of Morality; Man's Heart is no ſooner inclined to any Vice, but it grows fertile in Evaſions, Reaſons, and Pretences. Every Sinner has his Excuſes and his Shifts. If theſe who Teach Morality do no obviate thoſe Objections and deſtroy thoſe Excuſes, they can never obtain their Deſign; but this is a trouble which few Authors care to take upon them. Cauſe VII.

2. Books of Morals would produce more fruit than they do, if the Morality they Teach was neither too much relaxed, nor too ſevere. Morality is relaxed, when it does not propoſe the Duties of a Chriſtian Life in their full extent, or when it does not aſſert the abſolute neceſſity of the obſervation of thoſe Duties. It is ſtrained and too ſevere, when it impoſes Duties which God has not Commanded, or which cannot poſſibly be practiſed; and when it ranks among Sins things which are innocent. I touch this only by the by, becauſe I have ſpoken already in ſome other Places of this Treatiſe,

Part II. Treatiſe, both of the remiſs and over-ſevere Notions which Men form to themſelves about Religion. See Part I. Cauſe I. Art. II. and Cauſe II. Art. V. VI. and Part II. Cauſe III. Art. I.

3. Some of the Authors who handle Morality are guilty of another Fault, and that is a want of accuracy and exactneſs in their Idea's and Reaſonings. They do not conſider enough, Whether every thing they advance is ſtrictly ſolid and true, whether the Principles they lay down will hold, whether their Maxims are not ſtretched too far or abſurd, whether they do not contradict themſelves, whether they do not make uſe of frivolous Reaſons, whether nothing is falſe or mean in the Motives they urge; in a word, whether or not their works will be able to ſtand the Cenſure of a Judicious Reader. Moraliſts as well as the generality of Preachers, are a little too much carried away by the heat of their Imagination and Zeal, and they do not reaſon enough. They often go about to move People with Rhetorical Figures, rather than by dint of reaſons. And this is a very ill Method. In Matters of Morality, it chiefly concerns a Man to ſpeak and to argue cloſe; without this it is impoſſible that he ſhould either convince the Mind or produce a ſolid and diſcerning Piety.

4. The World is full of Books of Morality, and yet there are ſeveral important ſubjects which have nct hitherto been treated as they ought, or if they have, it was in Works which

which are not read by the People. Thoſe who ſtudy Morality are often ſenſible of this defect, and complain juſtly that they do not find in Books, all the light and helps they look for there: It is but of late that any thing has been writ with exactneſs in French, upon Reſtitution. Who can doubt but that a good Book concerning Impurity would be highly uſeful? This ſin is exceeding common, but it is one of thoſe about which the People are the leaſt inſtructed. If Chriſtians underſtood the Nature of this Vice, its Conſequences, and the duties of thoſe who have fallen into it, they would certainly avoid it more carefully than they do. I might ſay the ſame of Injuſtice, of Swearing, and of ſome other Subjects. Cauſe VII.

IV. I come in the laſt place, to Books of Devotion: It is very neceſſary to make a right Choice of them, becauſe of all the Books of Religion they are thoſe which are the moſt read.

1. I cannot help ſaying in the firſt place, That there are books of Devotion which are capable of introducing Corruption of Manners, and diverting Chriſtians from the ſtudy of Holineſs. We may eaſily apprehend how there ſhould be Books of this kind, if we conſider that many, even among Divines, think it dangerous to inſiſt upon good Works, and to preſs Morality: And there are Books of Devotion, which were made on purpoſe to maintain ſo ſtrange an Opinion. Some Authors have taught that true Devotion and ſo-

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Part II. lid Piety, is not that which conſiſts in the Practice of Good Works; they have writ that the Doctrine which repreſents good Works as a neceſſary condition in order to Salvation, overthrows the Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith; that Works cannot be looked upon as the way to Heaven; that all we have to do now under the Goſpel-Covenant, is to receive and to accept of the Salvation purchaſed for us; and that the Goſpel requires Works, only from the Motives of gratitude and Love. Nay thoſe Authors enter into diſpute; thea attempt to refute the Arguments drawn from the Exhortations, Promiſes and Threatnings of Scripture which might be urged againſt them, and they tax with Phariſaiſm or Pelagianiſm, thoſe who are of an Opinion Contrary to theirs. I cannot think the Authors of ſuch Books did publiſh them with ill intentions, but I could wiſh they had abſtained from writing things which give ſuch mighty advantages to Libertines, and which may blaſt the fruit of all the Books of Morality, and of all the Exhortations which are addreſſed to Sinners. And yet theſe Books are Printed, and which is more ſurprizing, thoſe Divines who are ſo rigid and ſcrupulous in point of Books and Sentiments, do not oppoſe the publiſhing of ſuch Works, but they ſuffer them quietly to paſs for Current in the World.

2. The Books of Myſtical Devotion are likewiſe moſt dangerous; and their number is greater than we imagine. For to ſay nothing

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of thoſe in which Myſtical and Fanatical Principles are openly propoſed, many Works which are otherwiſe full of good things are ſprinkled with that Spirit of Fanaticiſm. I ſhall not ſtand to give here the Character of thoſe Books, nor to ſhew the miſchief they may do in relation to Libertines, or to thoſe Perſons who want either Knowledg or a diſcerning Judgment; becauſe I will not repeat what I have ſaid of Myſtical Piety. Part I. Cauſe II. Art. VIII. Cauſe VII.

3. Some Authors who have put out Books of Piety have made it their whole Buſineſs to adminiſter Comfort. Thoſe who read their Works, may eaſily ſee that they looked upon the Comfortable ſide of Religion, and that their Principal deſign was, to fill their Readers, with Confidence, Hope and Joy. Without doubt it is a laudable and pious Deſign, to uſe one's endeavours to Comfort the Afflicted, and particularly good Men; and I confeſs that we find in the Books which have been compoſed with that view, many edifying things and noble Sentiments of Piety; but for all that, thoſe Books may eaſily inſpire Men with Security when the Conſolations which they diſpenſe, are not attended with great Circumſpection and Prudence.

I could wiſh that all thoſe who have publiſhed Books of this kind, had well conſidered theſe two following Truths. The firſt is, That the Comforts which Religion affords, belong only to true Chriſtians; ſo that is an eſſen-

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I could wiſh that all thoſe who have publiſhed Books of this kind, had well conſidered theſe two following Truths. The firſt is, That the Comforts which Religion affords, belong only to true Chriſtians; ſo that is an

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Part II. essential part of the Duty of Comforters, carefully to distinguish Persons, and to mark clearly who those are that have a right to Religious Comforts. The Second is, that it is as necessary to Sanctifie, as it is to Comfort Men; nay, That the Sanctifying them is the more necessary of the two, because Holiness is more essential to a good Man, than Consolation and Joy; and also because Men are much more inclined to presume than to condemn themselves; besides that there are but few who want Comfort, in comparison with those who ought to to be terrified.

The Consolations of which the Books of Piety are full, are intended either for Afflicted Persons or for Sinners. As for the first, it is better to teach them how to make a good use of their Afflictions, and to bring them to examine and amend their Lives, than to discourse to them upon some general Topick of Comfort, which perhaps will only lay them faster asleep in security, and which is besides generally misapplied. For all that the Gospel says of Afflictions is commonly laid together, and that too with no great Judgment; and what is said only of the Afflictions of the Faithful who suffer for Christ's sake, is applied to the Afflictions which are common to all Mankind. It is much more necessary to teach Men how to die well, than to fortify them against the fear of Death; Nay, we cannot give them a more substantial Comfort, than if we perswade them to live well, since a good

Life

Life will most certainly bring them to a happy Death. Cause VII.

But we ought to be particularly cautious when we comfort Sinners and give them assurances of the Divine Mercy; for if this is not done with great circumspection, we may easily harden and ruin at the same time, that we are comforting them. This is the mischief of those Books, which speak but little of Repentance and insist much upon Confidence, whose only design it is to encourage the greatest Sinners, and to exhort them to a bold reliance upon God's Mercy, without fearing either the heinousness, or the Multitude of their Sins. Such Consolations are capable of a good Sense; but if they are not proposed with due explication and restrictions, vast numbers of People will abuse them. That which has been writ by some Authors in Books of Devotion, concerning Sin and Good Works, is apt to lead Men into this fancy, That good Works signify nothing in order to Salvation, and that Sin does not obstruct it. Under pretence of answering the Accusations of the Devil and of the Law, these Authors enervate the strongest Arguments for the necessity of good Works, they confute the Declarations of Scripture concerning Sanctification, and they destroy as much as in them lies, the Sincerity and Truth of the Precepts and threatnings of the Gospel. For what they call the Accusations of the Devil and

Part II. of the Law, is sometimes nothing else but the just apprehensions of a guilty Conscience which are inspired by the Gospel, and which should be cherished and fortified to bring Sinners to Repentance, instead of being removed by ill-dispensed Consolations.

It is said to this, that Sinners are not to be driven to Despair. But do we make Sinners desperate, by saying that they are not in a State of Salvation, when really they are not? Do we not comfort them enough, when we exhort them to have recourse to God's Mercy and to repent? What if we should by unseasonable Consolations, fill them with a vain and groundless Confidence; would not that security ruin them more certainly than Desperation? To make Men fearless is the ready way to undo them. After all, I cannot imagine, why People should talk so much of Despair, and seem so hugely afraid of it. By the endeavours used in Books and Sermons to keep Sinners from it, one would think that we had great reason to fear on that hand, and that nothing were more ordinary than for Men to despair of the Divine Mercy; and yet there is nothing more unusual. For one Sinner who is terrified with his Sins, thousands are undone by Security. It is remarkable that the Scripture speaks but seldom of Despair, and when we have well examined all the places which are thought to mention it, we shall not find many that speak positively of it. Many Church-Men who have Cure of Souls, confess that they never saw any Person afflicted with Despair. And as for the Instances which are alledged to this purpose, it is certain that what is called Desperation is commonly nothing else but a Fit of the Spleen and an effect of Grief and Melancholy. So that those who make long Discourses to prevent Sinners falling into Despair, take great pains to little purpose, and do for the most part fight with a shadow.

4. There

4. There is another Fault in some Books of Devotion quite contrary to this I have now observed, which is, that they terrify their Readers without reason. If Authors, otherwise Pious and Learned, had not spoken in their Writings of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, of Reprobation, Despair, the Power of the Devil, and of some other Matters, many People would have been free from those terrible Frights which the indiscreet handling of those Subjects did throw them into. The reading of such Books has occasioned, and does still produce great Mischiefs, when they are read by Men of weak Heads, that are inclined to Melancholy; and the Number of such Persons is very considerable. Some have fancied they had committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost; and being possessed with that dismal Thought, they have spent their Lives in dreadful Apprehensions, of which nothing could cure them. Others have imagined, That their Case was desperate, and that they were in a State of Reprobation, and Damnation: Others have conceited, that they were given up to the Power of Satan; and they have taken the Disorders of Imagination, for certain Signs of their being possessed with an Evil Spirit: And the worst of it is, that such indiscreet Discourses are more apt to alarm good, than wicked Men. In fine, I reckon among the Books that fright Men without Cause, all those which contain too rigid and austere Maxims of Devotion and Morality. Cause VII.

5. Piety would be better known, and more esteemed than it is, if Books of devotion were always writ with Judgment, and Good Sense, and if there was nothing in them, but what, upon a severe Examination, would appear to be strictly true. Those who set about Works of this nature, do generally make it their Business to move the Heart, and to excite Sentiments of Piety. This is a good

Part II.

Deſign; but we ought to know, that it is the Force of Reaſons; the Evidence of Proofs, the Greatneſs of the Objects propoſed, and the Clearneſs and Solidity of what a Man ſays, which does truly affect the Heart. This is what Judicious Authors chiefly mind; and thereby many have had good Succeſs in thoſe excellent Works which they have enriched the publick with. But other Writers do not conſider this; they rather chooſe to ſay tender and pathetical Things, than to think, or ſpeak, with exactneſs: They conſult Imagination more than Good Senſe, they pour out every thing, which is in the Heat of meditation, or in the Fervency of their Zeal, ſeems to them proper to move, to melt, to comfort, or to terrifie. Hence it is, that there are weak places in their Books and Thoughts; which appear mean, and even falſe, to diſcerning Readers; Contradictions, and ſuch like Defects: For on the one hand, they produce only a confuſed, and not a very rational Devotion, in thoſe who read and reliſh them: And on the other hand, they expoſe Religion to the Flouts, and Contempt, of Libertines. We are often troubled and ſcandilized, to find, that ſome Men of Parts expreſs but little Eſteem for Books of Piety: We hear it is ſaid every Day, that thoſe Books are only good for Women, and for the Vulgar. This Contempt chiefly proceeds from a profane Humour, and from Libertiniſm; but it ſprings likewiſe from the want of Exactneſs and Solidity, which is obſervable in ſome Books of Devotion.

6. Divers Conſiderations might be offered here about thoſe Books which contain Forms of Prayers and Devotion; but I ſhall confine my ſelf to theſe two, which appear to me the moſt material. The firſt is, That thoſe kinds of Forms, make all ſorts of Perſons indifferently, and even good Men ſay things, which cannot agree, but to the greateſt and the moſt

most notorious Sinners; which gives People this dangerous Notion, That all Men, without excepting the Regenerate, are extremely corrupt. In divers Prayers we plainly see, that those who composed them, had no other Design, than to draw the Picture of the most heinous Sinners, and that they supposed all Men engaged in a deep Corruption, and in the most criminal Disorders. Exaggerations, and Hyperboles, are so little spared by some People upon this Head, that they utter Absurdities and Falshoods in their Prayers; as when they say, That ever since we were born, we have been continually, and every moment, offending God, by Thoughts, Words, and Deeds. Cause VII.

I do not deny, but that such Prayers may have their use, provided nothing be said in them that is extravagant, or contrary to Truth and Common Sense; they fit great Numbers of Persons: There are but too many of those wretched Christians, who can never sufficiently bewail the Enormity of their Sins, and the Irregularities of their Conduct. I know besides, that all Men are Sinners, and that the best of them have Reason to humble and abase themselves in the sight of God, out of a sense of their own weakness and unworthiness. Nevertheless, since the Scripture makes a difference between Good and Bad Men, it is at least a great piece of Imprudence, to appoint the same Language for both, and to make them all speak as if they were guilty of the most horrid Crimes, and as if there was not one good Man in the World. This takes away the Distinction between the Sinners and the Righteous; for if these Prayers are proper for all sorts of Persons, if all that is said in them is true, it is a vain thing to distinguish a good Man from a bad; and, it is to no purpose to pray to God for his Converting Grace, or to make any promise of Amendment to him: All those Lessons of

Part. II. Holineſs which the Goſpel gives us, are but fine Idea's; all Men are upon the matter equally bad, and they may all be the Objects of God's Mercy, how irregular ſoever their Deportment may be. Theſe are the Inferences which may be drawn from thoſe Forms of Devotion I have mentioned, and which Sinners do actually draw from them. From all this, I conclude, That in ſuch Works it is neceſſary to diſtinguiſh *Perſons* and *Conditions*: And this accordingly has been judiciouſly obſerved by ſome Authors.

The other Conſideration relates to the Form of Prayers; theſe are not always plain enough. They are ſometimes ſtudied Diſcourſes, which have more of Art and Wit than of Affection in them. And we may eaſily diſcern how far moſt Prayers are removed from a due Simplicity, if we compare them with thoſe which are contained in Holy Scripture, or with the ancient Way of Praying which was received in the Church, and of which we may judge by the *Liturgies* which are now uſed, or which have reached to us. Prayers were neither ſo intricate then, nor ſo long as they are now. Long Preambles were not uſed in the beginning of Prayers, and Men did not then by ſo many Windings approach the Throne of Grace, to confeſs their Sins, and to beg Pardon for them. Prayers then were ſhort, ſimple and natural, much fitter to excite Devotion, to lift up the Heart to God, and to nouriſh Piety and Zeal, than many Forms which obtain at this day.

7. Of all the Books of Piety, none are more carefully read; and none perhaps have a greater Influence upon the Conduct and Manners of Chriſtians, than the Books of Preparation for the Holy Communion. The uſe of the Sacrament is one of the moſt important Acts of Religion, and one of the moſt efficacious Means to promote Piety; and

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it is certain that the Books which People read, in order to prepare themſelves for that ſacred Action, contribute very much to the good or bad uſe of the Euchariſt, and by Conſequence to the good or ill Life of Chriſtians. Now what I have ſaid of the other Books of Devotion may be applied to theſe. Some Books of this kind are extraordinary good, but there are others, in which among many good things ſome Defects are obſervable, and particulary theſe three. Cauſe VII.

1. All the Books of Preparation for the Holy Communion, are not inſtructive and ſolid enough. We find nothing elſe in ſome of them, but a heap of Thoughts, which have no dependance upon one another, of Rhetorical Figures, Allegories, and Compariſons fetched from the Old Teſtament, or from prophane Hiſtory. Theſe things may have their Uſe; they may be placed in a Sermon: But not to ſay that ſometimes, thoſe Thoughts and Compariſons are not very appoſite or ſuitable to the Subject; I ſhall only obſerve, That ſomething more than this is neceſſary, to ſtir up Devotion in the Communicants. I do but juſt name this, becauſe I have delivered my Opinion more at large concerning this Defect, in my three Reflections upon Books of Morality, and in the 5th upon Books of Devotion.

2. Other Books of Preparation are too general. They only conſider in the lump the Duties of Chriſtians in reference to the Communion; they ſpeak of Self-Examination, Repentance, Faith and Charity: But all this is of no great uſe to many groſs and ignorant Chriſtians, who neither know thoſe Duties, nor how they ought to be performed. Beſides, all thoſe who come to the Sacrament are not in the ſame Condition, ſome being good Men, and others impious and hypocritical Perſons. There are likewiſe ſeveral degrees of good Men as well as

Part II. of Hypocrites and ungodly Perſons, and the ſame Man may be better or worſe at one time than he is at another. Therefore it would be fitting that Books of Preparation, were compoſed in ſuch a manner, that every Reader may be led by them, into thoſe Reflections which are ſuitable to the State he is in. It is a groſs Error to imagine, that a general Preparation or Diſcourſe concerning the receiving of the Sacrament, is proper for all ſorts of Perſons. I confeſs that this is not the Fault of all the Books of Preparation, ſome we have, which are particular enough. The true Characters by which every Man may know his own State, are very exactly deſcribed by ſome Authors; but it is an unhappineſs that ſuch Works, are not better calculated for the uſe of the common People.

3. I think I may ſafely ſay in the third place, That the too ſevere Notion which ſome Books give of the Communion, is one of the Cauſes, why ſo many People do neither live, nor receive the Sacrament as they ought. It is a ſad thing that the Minds of Chriſtians ſhould be filled with ſo many Scruples in relation to the Sacrament, by inconſiderate Diſcourſes and over-ſtrained Maxims; Writers and Preachers do ſometimes ſpeak of the Holy Sacrament, as if every thing in it was full of Snares, and as if Hell and Damnation' were conſtantly waiting about it. They repreſent the Communion, as ſo extraordinary, ſo difficult and ſo dangerous an Action, that thoſe who read or hear thoſe Diſcourſes, are tempted to keep off from the Holy Table, and deſpair of partaking of it as they ought. So that whereas there ſhould be nothing but Joy, when the Euchariſt is celebrated in the Church, many are then agitated with extreme Perplexities and Terrors.

By this indiſcreet Severity it happens, that many good Men receive the Sacrament without Comfort; becauſe

becauſe their Conſciences are diſturbed with divers Scruples, which proceed from the reading of thoſe Books. There is a great number of pious Chriſtians, who never receive the Sacrament but with ſtrange apprehenſion and dread, inſomuch that ſeveral think they receive it to their Condemnation. Nay this diſcourages likewiſe many Sinners who have ſome inclinations to Good, and ſome deſire to ſet about the Work of *Repentance*. Indeed we muſt take heed not to flatter Sinners in their Vices, nor to propoſe to them too eaſie a Devotion and Morality. It is very fit in my Judgment, to give them a great Idea of the Purity which is required in ſo Holy and ſolemn an Action as the Communion is, and of the State which a Chriſtian ought then to be in. But as this State of Purity and Holineſs is attained only by degrees; that Idea, how true ſoever it may be, is apt to fright a Sinner, in the beginning of his Converſion; becauſe he does not find in himſelf at firſt, all the Characters of true *Repentance* and ſincere *Regeneration*: He ought therefore to be informed, That the beginnings of *Repentance* are weak, that it has its degrees and its *Progreſs*; and ſo that he ought not to be diſheartned; that God will accept of his Devotion and Endeavours, provided his *Repentance* increaſe afterwards and he forſake his Sins honeſtly. The Matter is over-done in point of Devotion and Morality, not only when we propoſe *Rules* which are too rigid, but alſo when we ſay things, which tho' true and conſonant to the Goſpel, are not ſufficiently accommodated to the State of thoſe we ſpeak to.

Cauſe VII.

Theſe are the principal *Reflections* I thought fit to beſtow, both upon Books of *Religion* and upon bad Books. All that remains now is to inquire, what *Remedies* are to be applied to the Cauſe of Corruption. The ſureſt of all would be to exterminate all the ill Books, and to take care that none

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Part II. ſuch ſhould be made for the time to come. But as this is not to be hoped, the only Remedy which can be tried, is on the one hand, to prevent as much as we can the Effect of bad Books; and on the other, to engage Men to read and to make a good uſe of good Books.

The Books which are contrary to Religion and good Manners may eaſily be known; but how to keep Men from reading and being corrupted by them is the Difficulty: And in all probability this is a Point which will never be entirely gained. Yet I think it is not impoſſible to prevent in ſome meaſure the Miſchief which thoſe Books occaſion in the World. In order to this, it would be requiſite, to take care in the firſt place, that young People might not read Books which inſpire Libertiniſm. To this end, the Authors who have writ things repugnant to Modeſty and Honeſty, ſhould be expelled the Schools. It is a ſurprizing thing that the Eccleſiaſticks, who have the direction of Academies and Colleges, and who are bound by their Character to redreſs this Abuſe, have not done it yet. In the next place it would be neceſſary, that in Families, Books that are apt to corrupt Youth ſhould be taken out of their way, and that they ſhould not be indulg'd in dangerous Readings. As for the reſt, I ſee no other Remedy, but that Preachers ſhould ſtrongly inſiſt in their Sermons, upon the Reaſons which ought to make Chriſtians averſe to the Reading of ill Books. I know that all theſe precautions, will not wholly ſuppreſs thoſe Books; nor prevent their being read by divers Perſons, but we may however gain thus much, that ill Books ſhall not be ſo freely and ſo commonly read as they are, and that they ſhall do leſs hurt.

As for Books of Religion, every one ſhould endeavour to diſcern thoſe which are good, and to make

make a good uſe of them. Indeed the diſcerning and the Choice of Books of Religion, is attended with ſome difficulty. The general Rule is to chuſe thoſe which are inſtructive and edifying. Every body will own this to be a good Rule, but all Men do not agree in the Application of it. What ſeems edifying to ſome, appears quite otherwiſe to others. In point of Religion all Men ſhould be of the ſame Mind, ſince they are all bound to believe the ſame Truths, and practiſe the ſame Duties, but their Teſtes are different, becauſe many of them have a vitiated Palate. Cauſe VII.

To ſpeak my Mind upon this Subject, I think that Chriſtians ſhould chiefly ſtick to thoſe Books, which prove the Truths of Religion, and which eſtabliſh by ſolid Arguments the fundamental Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and to thoſe which give a clear and exact View of the Duties of Morality: To theſe it may be uſeful to add the Works, in which we find the Examples of Perſons eminent for their Piety and Virtue. Such Examples are very efficacious to excite Men to the Practice of what is good, and they prove a great Preſervative againſt the Scandal occaſioned by bad Example, and againſt the Corruption of the Age. But not to enlarge further upon the Choice of Books, I refer the Reader to what has been ſaid in this Chapter.

A judicious Choice of Books being once made, the next thing is to make a good uſe of them. And here two Rules are to be obſerved. 1. A Man ſhould read with Judgment; And 2. he ſhould read in order to Practice.

1. What Book ſoever we read, it is adſolutely neceſſary to read it with Diſcretion and Judgment. We are commanded in Scripture, * *To prove all things, and to hold faſt that which is good; to try the*

* 1 Theſſ. V. 21. 1 John IV. 1.

Spirits

Part II. *Spirits and the Doctrines whether they are of God.*

This Caution is to be used lest we fall into Errors, since every Author is a *Man*, and by consequence may sometimes be mistaken. The common People do particularly need this Advice, because they are very apt to believe, that whatsoever is read in Books, especially in Books of Devotion, is true. But tho' a Book should contain nothing but what is good; Discretion is necessary to make a just Application of the Contents of it to our selves, because that which is proper for some is not suitable to others. The not observing this Rule is the reason why some Readers, who have a pure, but a timorous and short-sighted Conscience, are terrified without Cause, and apply to themselves what is said only of wicked Men; when on the other hand, hardened Sinners deceive themselves with vain hopes, by adapting to themselves, what relates only to good Men.

2. We ought to read, in order to practice, and that we may grow better; this is the more important Rule of the two, and that which distinguishes true from hypocritical Devotion. Many are very regular and constant in Reading, and they seldom fail to do it Mornings and Evenings: But the Deportment of those Persons who are so assiduous in the perusing of good Books, is not always agreeabte to the Rules of Devotion and Piety. When they are but just come from their Reading, we find them often sowr, peevish, and passionate; after they have read in the Morning, they spend the Day in Slandering, Gaming, or Idleness, and they avoid only the grosser, and the more noisie Sins. There are Readers of another Character; they read, and even delight in the Reading of Books of Religion: They like well enough those Works which prove the Truths of the Christian Religion, or treat of Morals; they speak of them advantagiously, and they will say fine Things concerning the Abuses which

which are crept into Religion, and upon the Necessity and the Beauty of Morals; but all this terminates only in a vain and fruitless Approbation, which they give to the Truths and Duties of the Gospel; for after all, they reform nothing in their Lives: Such Readings are but meer Amusements, and they are good for nothing but to rock Conscience into a most dangerons Sleep. The End of Reading, as well as that of Religion, ought to be the practice of Holiness. Cause VII.

I shall here observe, last of all, That Christians have a Book, which alone might suffise to preserve them from the Danger of ill Books, and to secure them against the Corruption of the Age, if they did use it as they ought; I mean the Holy Scripture: It is the best of all Books, a Work divinely inspired, which contains nothing but what is most excellent and true, and wherein we find every thing that is necessary to instruct, and to sanctifie Men. But it were to be wished.

1. That the Translations of Scripture, which are in the hands of the People, should be rendered more perfect, so that they might express the Sense of sacred Authors with all possible Exactness. All those who have studied the Original Text of the Bible, will own, that this is a necessary Work, and that the Translations need some Amendments. And so we see accordingly, that now and then, Divines and Translators, apply themselves to the correcting of them.

2. It would be to no purpose to have exact Translations of Scripture, if Men could not read it: I have already remarked it elsewhere, as a crying and shameful Abuse, that a great part of Christians should not be able to read. This Abuse should have been reformed long ago; and this might easily be done, if every Pastor did endeavour it in his own Church, and if the Magistrates did lend a helping Hand towards it.

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Part II. 3. The Holy Scripture ſhould be read more than it is, and Men ſhould make that uſe of it for which it was given. Other Books are only Streams, but when we read the Scripture, we drink at the very Fountain-head. Humane Books have their Faults, and therefore they ought to be read with great Diſcretion: But this Divine Book is moſt perfect, it is a Guide to whoſe Conduct we may give up our ſelves without fear or danger: This being certain, is it not ſtrange that the beſt of all Books ſhould be the moſt neglected? In many Countries the Bible is a Book unknown to the People. In other places the reading of it is permitted but with great Cautions, as if it were dangerous for Chriſtians to read a Book, by which God was pleaſed to reveal his Will to Men. In thoſe places where Chriſtians have an entire Liberty to read the Scripture, great multitudes make no advantage of that freedom. Many that are addicted to reading leave the Word of God for other Books. In a word, very few read it with ſuitable Diſpoſitions, and with a ſincere Deſign of learning the Will of God and of growing the better by it. And thus the far greater part of Mankind, is deſtitute of the moſt efficacious mean and remedy, which the Divine Goodneſs has afforded to Men, to preſerve them from the Contagion of Sin, and to make them happy. And ſo we need not wonder that the Corruption of Chriſtians ſhould be ſuch, as it hath been repreſented in this Work.

The Concluſion of this Treatiſe.

THis is what I had propoſed to ſay concerning the Cauſes of Corruption. I might have been larger upon theſe Matters, and have added many things which

which I have not touched. This is a very copious Field, and a Subject which can hardly be exhauſted; yet I think I have obſerved what is moſt material. Cauſe VII.

But it will be to little purpoſe to have detected the Cauſes of Corruption, if thoſe Cauſes do ſtill ſubſiſt; and therefore I conclude this Work with an earneſt entreaty to my Readers, That they will make ſerious Reflections upon it, and that if they find that in Fact, Corruption proceeds from thoſe Cauſes I have mentioned, thy will ſtrive to remove them. The Undertaking will no doubt, appear very difficult to many. They will own the Truth of what I have ſaid, but they will look upon the deſign of oppoſing the Corruption of the Age, as vain and chimerical. They will ſay that all this is very fine inthe Theory, but that the Practice of it is impoſſible: I confeſs here is ſome difficulty, but yet I am perſuaded, that what I have propoſed might ſucceſsfully be done, at leaſt in ſome reſpects.

But the general Cauſes of Corruption cān ſcarce be remedied but by publick Perſons. I therefore apply my ſelf here particularly to Divines and to the Paſtors of the Church, and I conjure them to make it their ſerious buſineſs, to diſcover and to ſtop the Springs of Corruption. Let them turn all their Endeavours that way; let them labour to diſpel the Ignorance and Prejudices which ſo many Chriſtians live in, and to confute thoſe Maxims and Sentiments which feed Security and Libertiniſm; let them preſs with Zeal the reſtoring of Order and Diſcipline; let them inceſſantly lay before the People and the Magiſtrates, the neceſſity of redreſſing ſeveral Abuſes which are now in vogue; let them incelcate theſe things and inſiſt upon them with Zeal, but at the ſame time with Prudence and Charity; let them concert Meaſures among themſelves; let them act unanimouſly in ſo Noble a Deſign. Above all things let them take care to ſeaſon Young People

Part II. People with good Inſtruction, and to inſpire them with Sentiments of Religion and Vertue. Theſe are the Sollicitudes which become the Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt. Theſe are Enterprizes worthy of their Character and their Zeal, and the things which ought chiefly to be conſidered in the Aſſemblies of the Clergy. But let them not be diſcouraged by the Difficulties they are like to meet with. They will ſtill gain ſomething, even when they may fancy they labour in vain. If they do not obtain all that they deſire, if they do not cure the whole Evil, they will remove at leaſt ſome part of it. So holy an Enterprize will ſooner or later be fortunate in the Iſſue, and God will pour down a Bleſſing upon thoſe Means which he himſelf has appointed.

One would think that Providence is at work to bring about happier Times, and that things are tending that way. This is an Age of Knowledge, and Religion is now better proved and explained than ever it was. There is a conſiderable number of judicious and learned Divines, and Paſtors, who are deeply griev'd to ſee the preſent face of Things, and who are ſenſible how neceſſary it would be to oppoſe Corruption. So many Books which are writ on purpoſe to revive true Chriſtianity, and to bring Men to Holineſs, ſeem to bode ſome Bleſſed Revolution, and to argue a general Diſpoſition towards it. God who preſides over all things, and particularly over that which concerns Religion, bleſs the Deſigns and Endeavours of all thoſe, who have good Intentions, and grant that we may quickly ſee Truth, Piety, Peace and Order, intirely reſtored among Chriſtians.

FINIS.